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ABSTRACT

A crisis can occur at any time, whether or not a school's staff plans for it. This resource guide is a compilation of user-friendly examples of policies, procedures, guidelines, checklists, and forms to help Virginia schools develop and implement a systematic crisis-management plan. Chapter 1 provides an introductory overview of the essential elements of effective crisis management and an overview of the resource guide. Chapter 2 focuses on policy and leadership and examines crisis management primarily from the perspectives of local school boards, central-office administrators, and building-level administrators. The third chapter examines the crisis-response team and three levels of response--building, central office, and community--that constitute a network to support action. The development of the school-crisis-management plan is the focus of chapter 4. The fifth chapter offers strategies for communicating with the school community, parents, the community at large, and the media. Chapter 6 highlights plans for training and maintaining preparedness, and chapter 7 contains a quick guide to crisis management. Appendices contain sources for information and assistance. (Contains 25 references). (LMI)

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RESOURCE GUIDE

FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF COMPENSATORY PROGRAMS

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RESOURCE GUIDE
For Crisis Management in Schools

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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

George Allen
Governor

October 1996

Dear Friend:

We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide you with the **RESOURCE GUIDE FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS.**

One of our primary concerns is public safety, especially the safety of our children. It is critically important that our schools provide a safe environment for our children. This guide is an excellent tool to use in shaping that environment.

The contents of this guide have been developed for easy use and effective planning. The various sections offer strategies for preparedness, prevention, crisis response and postvention. The topics are timely and the material is current.

We hope that you will find this guide useful in creating the safest possible environment for Virginia students.

On behalf of the Governor, thank you for all that you do for Virginia's youth.

Sincerely,

Beverly H. Sgro
Secretary of Education

Jerry W. Kilgore
Secretary of Public Safety

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Foreword

Every day Virginia's schools are responsible for the safety of a million students. This **Resource Guide for Crisis Management in Schools** is intended as a tool to assist local school divisions in developing or refining and updating their own comprehensive plans for the management of crises.

The development of this publication was sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education as part of its continuing efforts to provide support and technical assistance to schools. The project was funded through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 which is administered by the Office of Compensatory Programs, Division of Instruction, Virginia Department of Education. The Resource Guide was developed, under contract, by The Center for School-Community Collaboration in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

This Resource Guide represents the Department of Education's most recent effort to support schools in dealing effectively with crises. In 1990 the Department's Youth Risk Prevention Project produced the manual Crises Affecting Youth and subsequently sponsored a number of training opportunities throughout the state for school crisis teams. Requests from local school divisions for assistance with preparing for crises have continued. This publication was developed in direct response to such requests. At the same time, the broader issue of School Safety has emerged as a priority at both the national and state levels, and effective crisis management has come to be recognized as an essential element of safe schools planning. The content of this Resource Guide reflects the influence of School Safety.

Greatest priority was given to producing a document which is, above all, usable. Several challenges were faced in its development. First, Virginia's diversity — a source of strength — made unsuitable the development or selection of a single "model" policy or set of procedures or forms. Policies, procedures, and even forms need to reflect local conditions and resources. Second, different members of the school community have different perspectives and information needs. Therefore, the Resource Guide must serve the needs of multiple audiences. What has resulted can best be described as a comprehensive compilation of the most "user friendly" examples of policies, procedures, guidelines, checklists, and forms which could be identified. Narrative is limited to that which is necessary to establish basic understandings and to guide the reader from section to section through the guide. Also included is a Quick Guide to Crises, organized alphabetically, which lists actions to be taken in the event of various types of crises. Related Readings are cited throughout, and supplementary materials are included as Appendices. Whether used to develop a brand new Crisis Management Plan or to review and update an existing Plan, this Resource Guide is intended to support effective crisis management in Virginia schools.

Acknowledgements

Sincere appreciation is extended to the following individuals for their assistance in developing this Resource Guide.

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Effective Crisis Management

Crisis Management and School Safety •
Elements of Effective Crisis Management •
Overview of Crisis Management Resource Guide •

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Effective Crisis Management

A crisis can occur at anytime whether or not we plan for it. It is unlikely that any school will escape the necessity of responding to a significant crisis. A crisis can impact a single building or the entire school division, depending on the nature of the crisis. Establishing a **Crisis Management Plan** anticipates potential problems and establishes a coordinated response to minimize school community stress and disruptions. A time-limited, problem-focused intervention aims to identify, confront and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support appropriate adaptive responses.

For the purposes of this Resource Guide, "crisis" is defined as:

A sudden, generally unanticipated event that profoundly and negatively affects a significant segment of the school population and often involves serious injury or death.

Crisis Management and School Safety

Crisis Management is a central component of comprehensive **School Safety.** The most important consideration in both Crisis Management and Safe Schools efforts is the **health, safety and welfare** of the students and staff. A comprehensive Safe Schools Plan places a strong emphasis on prevention using strategies which range from building design to discipline policies and programs which improve school climate.

Crisis Management is that part of a school division's approach to school safety which focuses more narrowly on a time-limited, problem-focused intervention to identify, confront and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support appropriate adaptive responses.

"There are two types of school administrators: those who have faced a crisis and those who are about to."

- Ron Stephens, Executive Director, National School Safety Center

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Elements of Effective Crisis Management

The essential elements of effective crisis management in schools include the following:

Policy and Leadership - Policy provides both a foundation and a framework for action. The chances of effectively managing a crisis are increased with a division level plan and individual building plans which operate within the framework of the division plan but are tailored to the conditions and resources of the individual school. Leadership is necessary to ensure effective implementation of plans and maintenance of preparedness.

The Crisis Response Team - A school Crisis Response Team can be a highly effective organizational unit for dealing with a variety of crises. Such teams can operate at three levels: individual school building, central office, and community. Well-functioning teams at each level provide a network that can support action whenever crises arise.

The School Crisis Management Plan - A school that is *prepared* before a crisis occurs will be much more likely to deal with students and staff effectively. **An unprepared school is asking for chaos.**

Communications - When a crisis occurs, effective communication is essential — within the school and the school division, with parents and the community at large, and with the media. Effective communication can speed the restoration of equilibrium; poor communication can make a bad situation much worse.

Training and Maintenance - Preparation for and response to crises rely on people understanding policies and procedures and knowing what they are to do. These are achieved through *training*. Maintaining preparedness is an ongoing process which involves debriefing following crises, periodic review and updating, and ongoing training.

Overview of Crisis Management Resource Guide

This **Resource Guide** includes a compilation of the most "user friendly" examples of policies, procedures, guidelines, checklists, and forms which could be identified. Narrative is limited to that which is necessary to establish basic understandings and to guide the reader from section to section.

Many of Virginia's school divisions have developed policies, procedures, and guidelines for the management of crises in their schools. This **Resource Guide** has borrowed heavily from these school divisions as well as from other resources. A conscientious effort has been made to cite sources for each item included. Where no source is cited, the item has, in most cases, been developed for this **Resource Guide**.

Organization

This **Resource Guide** is organized to support the development and implementation of a systematic crisis management plan. It is designed to be used as a general resource guide and training tool.

Chapter I provides an introductory overview of the essential elements of effective crisis management and an overview of the Resource Guide.

Chapter II focuses on policy and leadership and examines crisis management primarily from the perspectives of local school boards and school division-level administrators. Elements of typical school division policies are identified and a sample school division policy is provided. Roles of the Superintendent and key central office staff are detailed. This chapter also includes a true/false test to assess a school's preparedness for crisis and a brief examination of the building Principal's role.

Chapter III examines the Crisis Response Team including the three levels of response — building, central office, and community — which constitute a network to support action. Expertise needed on such teams is described and a detailed list of roles and responsibilities for Crisis Response Team members is provided.

Chapter IV concentrates on development of the School Crisis Management Plan. With restoration of equilibrium the primary objective, this chapter includes numerous samples of procedures, checklists, and forms. The chapter is organized to focus first on preparation, then crisis response, and then postvention. The chapter concludes with a separate section which focuses on suicide.

Chapter V deals with the issue of communication — within the school and school division, with parents and the community at large, and — often most challenging— the media. Included are strategies for effective and timely communication, sample announcements, statements, and letters for use within the school and with parents, and an extensive section on working with the media.

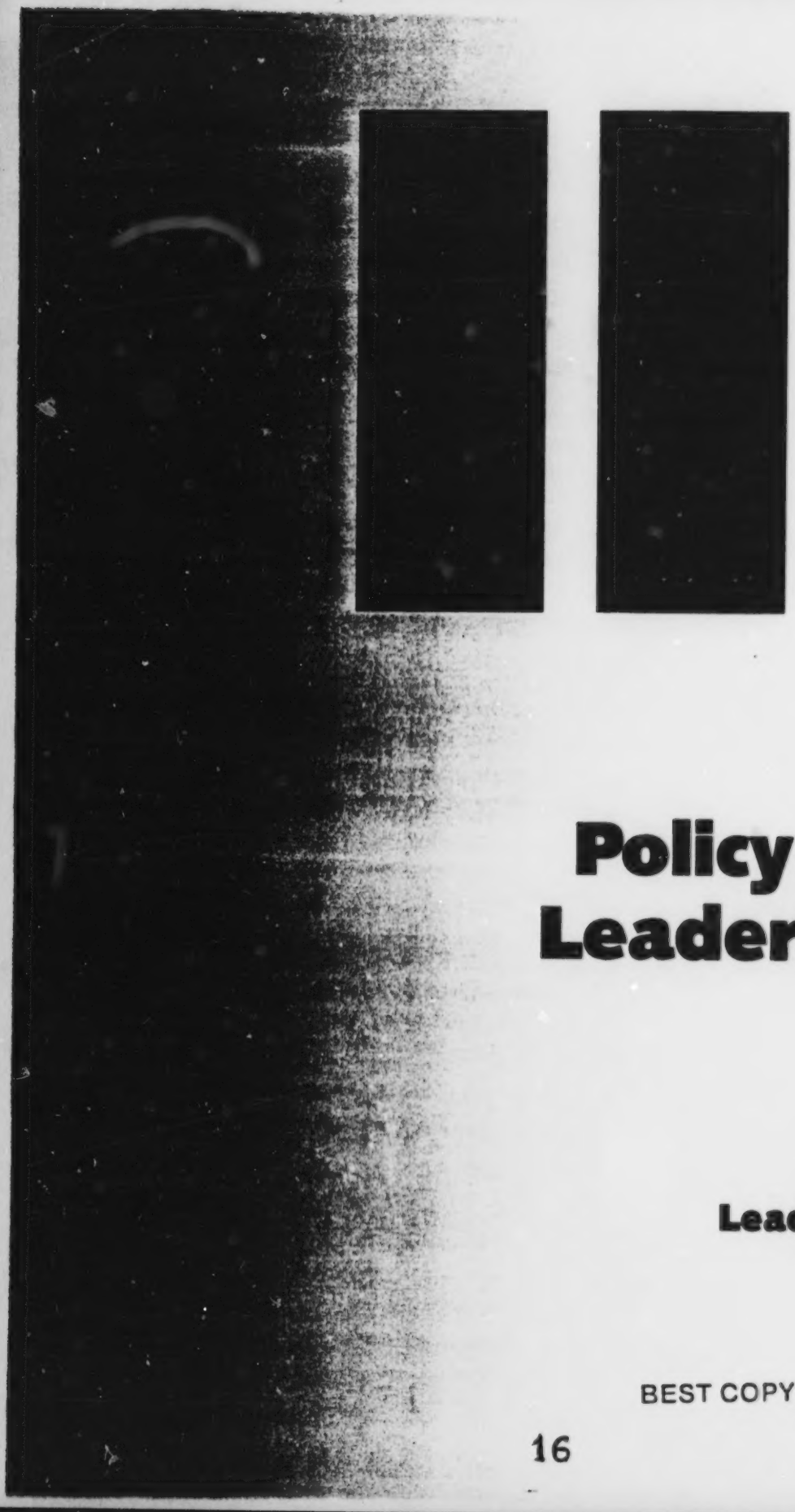
Chapter VI highlights training and the maintenance of preparedness. It includes a discussion of training needs, sample agendas, and related sample training materials as well as checklists for remaining prepared through periodic review of Crisis Management Plans and ongoing training.

Chapter VII is a Quick Guide to Crisis Management. Arranged alphabetically by type of crisis, the chapter provides a variety of samples of guidelines and checklists for the management of specific types of crises.

References are listed after Chapter VII.

Appendices include sources of information and assistance with Crisis Management and a list of books for use with students, staff, and parents.

Related Readings are cited throughout the Guide.



Policy and Leadership

Policy •
Leadership •

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Policy

Policy provides both a foundation and a framework for action. The chances of effectively managing a crisis are increased with a division level plan and individual building plans which operate within the framework of the division plan but are tailored to the conditions and resources of the individual school. School division policies typically include the following elements:

- a *definition* of "crisis."
- a requirement that each school establish a crisis management *team* and develop a crisis management *plan.*
- specifications for *membership* of the crisis management team, usually including provisions for accessing, in the event of crisis, additional resources from within the school division and/or community.
- specifications for issues to be addressed in each school's crisis management plan, usually including designation of chain of *command,* development of *protocols* for management of specific types of crises, coordination of *communications,* provisions for *support services,* staff inservice *training,* and periodic *review* of the plan.

A sample statement based on policy established in Hanover County Public Schools is provided on the following pages:

"Establishment of a crisis management plan anticipates potential problems and establishes a coordinated response to minimize school community stress and disruptions."

- School Crisis Prevention and Response, National School Safety Center Resource Paper

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Samples

Sample School Division Policy

Crisis Management Planning

A. Definitions

1. "Crisis incidents" shall include but not be limited to situations involving fire, wars, natural disasters, the use of weapons/explosives or the death of a student, staff member, or someone in a student's immediate family. The principals shall have the authority to determine what is a crisis incident and to convene the Crisis Management Team.

2. The individual school "Crisis Management Plan" shall be a written plan with explicit intent to protect and sustain life, reduce emotional trauma, assist in emotional recovery from trauma, minimize personal injury and/or damage to the facility.

B. Crisis Management Team

Individual School Crisis Management Team shall be established at each school to meet the demands of crisis incidents.

1. Membership: The crisis team shall consist of an immediately accessible core group who have the knowledge and skills to act in any emergency and shall include the principal, assistant principal, one or more guidance counselors, school psychologists, nurse/clinic attendant, one or more selected teachers, and a person to record events/minutes of meetings. As needed, the Hanover Mental Health Crisis Services, the substance abuse counselor, a school social worker, and/or the liaison or DARE officer may be asked to consult with the school team. A roster of team members may be posted in each school administration office.

2. Purposes: The Crisis Team shall implement and adapt appropriate action from the Crisis Management Plan to address the specific events of the crisis. Roles and responsibilities of team members and consultants will be established in the school's written Crisis Management Plan.

A crises Management Plan is intended to
- *protect and sustain life*
- *reduce emotional trauma*
- *assist emotional recovery*
- *minimize injury / damage*

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Samples

C. Crisis Management Plan

Each school Crisis Management Plan shall include provisions for Pre-planning, Intervention/Response, and Post-emergency activities, including the establishment or designation of the following:

1. Explicit procedures for each crisis incident.

2. Crisis headquarters and command post outside the school facility in the event evacuation is necessary.

3. Chain of command in the event a key administrator is not available.

4. Spokesperson to the media. This person will be the principal or designee and is responsible for gathering and confirming all pertinent information about the incident and for informing the school division's public information officer prior to any media release. The spokesperson will also designate a media reception area when deemed appropriate.

5. Network of key communicators. It is the responsibility of these key individuals to convey approved information to others. This network may include phone trees to notify staff of emergency incidents and special meetings which may occur before or after school hours, and various counselors designated to support groups such as students, faculty, and parents.

6. Communication plan within the school and to the community. The best means of communication may vary with the crisis. However, the plan must provide for communicating with teachers as soon as possible. When appropriate, well-informed representatives should be ready to go into classrooms. Avoid giving news via assembly or public address systems as results can be unpredictable when giving shocking news to large groups of students. To ensure accuracy and avoid rumor, information to students must come directly from internal memoranda or statements written specifically for that purpose and approved by the principal. News is best given to students in class so they can ask questions of a person they know. Questions from parents should also be addressed from a pre-approved fact sheet.

7. Arrangement for support services. One individual from the Crisis Management Team will be designated to contact the school board office and to contact Mental Health Crisis Services. The school board office will arrange for assistance as needed from additional school psychologists, school social workers, and other guidance counselors and to contact Mental Health Crisis Services. School arrangements should include the designation of meeting spaces, provisions to request on-call services to meet unexpected demand, and provision of long term follow-up.

8. Bring closure to the crisis. This activity will vary depending on the crisis. But it is imperative to recognize officially the end of the crisis and the beginning of the healing process. This may include a review of the incident and the implementation of the plan.

9. Evaluation of the crisis plan. Crisis Management Team annually will evaluate the plan and its effectiveness and make modifications as needed.

D. Crisis Management Inservice

The Crisis Management Plan shall be reviewed annually with the full school staff and shared with all transient staff, nurse/clinic attendants, secretaries, cafeteria staff, custodians, and bus drivers. Schools are encouraged to provide inservice on specific crisis related topics such as substance abuse code violations, neglect and abuse, and suicide prevention.

"A coordinated district-wide crisis response is no accident.
It reflects prevention, intervention, and rehearsed reaction."

- Educational Leadership, November 1994

Leadership

Policy provides the foundation and framework for Crisis Management. **Leadership,** however, is necessary to ensure effective implementation and maintenance of a preparedness.

Why should school leaders make Crisis Management a priority?

The **legal obligation** of school administrators to make crisis plans has been outlined by Peterson and Straub (1992) who cited the growing trend to hold the third party (school) responsible for failing to take reasonable steps to prevent a crisis or to adequately manage a crisis situation which arises. Many states are enacting legislation to address these issues, and are requiring schools to develop safety plans, an essential component of which is crisis management planning (Stephens, 1994).

Poland (1994) advises that school crisis planning be viewed as "an ever evolving task that needs to be listed as a priority on the job descriptions. . ." Making preparedness a priority may require building crisis planning into job descriptions, personnel evaluations, and school audits. Two useful strategies are:

- explicitly listing crisis planning as an area of responsibility in job descriptions and on principal (personnel) evaluations
- explicitly identifying crisis preparedness (including having a plan and conducting related training and periodic reviews) as an area to be assessed in individual school audits

Obstacles to crisis planning in schools:

- *Myths exist that taking action will make a crisis worse.*
- *Territorial issues exist about whose job it is; it is not listed in anyone's job description, although it needs to be.*
- *Schools often lack needed resources and administrators often lack planning time.*
- *Almost no curriculum units exist that are devoted to safety topics, conflict resolution, and problem solving.*

Source: McIntyre and Reid (1989)

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Leadership at the Central Office Level

Involvement of central office staff is critical to the successful of school emergencies. Watson et al (1990) note the need for school division staff to be prepared to take over management of all significant components of major school emergencies, leaving school staff to deal with the immediate needs of students and parents. They describe the district (division) plan as a management plan and identify six major phases in its development:

1. **Analysis of resources** - review of current policies and procedures; geographic location of schools in terms of proximity to hazards and resources; assessment of transportation and communications capabilities; compatibility of division plan with individual school plans.

2. **Development of the emergency plan** - identification of tasks and assignment of roles for division personnel (see examples below); establishment of alternative communications and evacuation systems; preparation for both on- and off-campus emergencies.

3. **Coordination of the district plan with school and community plans** - inclusion of and coordination with fire, law enforcement, and emergency officials; including many different views results in a more comprehensive and effective plan.

4. **Making the plan public** - disseminate broadly, particularly to school and community groups who might be able to contribute to the management of an emergency.

5. **Training all staff and volunteer personnel** - the plan cannot be implemented properly unless school personnel, including volunteers, understand the plan and what is expected of them.

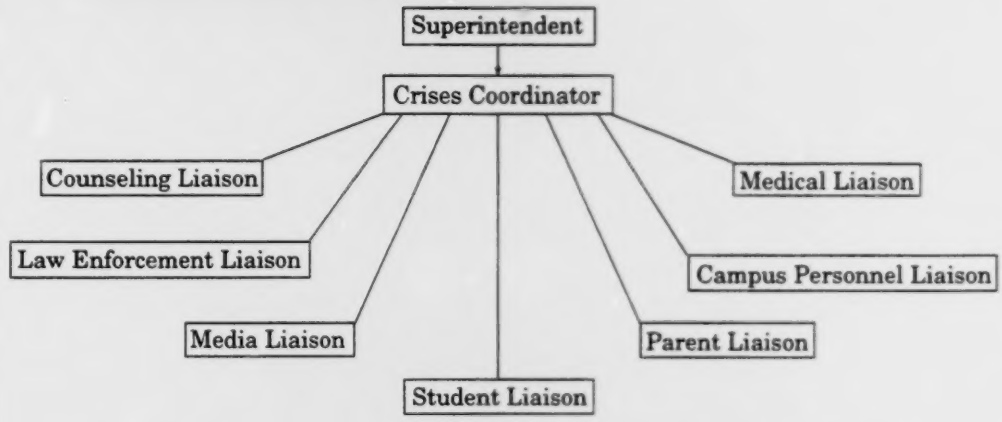
6. **Sharing the plan with state and local agencies** - send copies to local fire, law enforcement, and emergency agencies.

Related Reading

"Are Our Schools Safe?", AEL Policy Briefs, 1993, by Patricia Ceperley and Karen Simon, Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, WV.

Pitcher and Poland (1992) note that "to actually train and maintain a fully functional crisis team is a significant commitment of district resources and time. . . Further, if crisis teams are to be available at each building, it will be necessary to enforce the responsibility and ensure that each building principal is invested in the effort" (p. 144). Noting that no one person can do everything, they recommend a "crisis team" approach at both the school division and school building levels.

Potential Roles for a Crises Team



Potential roles for a crises team may be conceptualized in terms of "liaisons" or coordinators (Pitcher and Poland, 1992)

Areas which Pitcher and Poland (1992) identify needing attention are the following:

- Campus coordination, direction, communication with superiors and logging of event and actions.
- Response to students' needs.
- Medical emergency plans.
- Contacts with law enforcement.
- Contacts with parents.
- Contacts with the media.
- Correspondence with staff.
- Counseling services.
- Communication with other city or state officials.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following possible Central Office functions have been identified and may be considered in assigning of Central Office staff roles:

Senior Management Roles
(Superintendent, Deputy and Assistant Superintendents)

- Direct all operations of the school division in the management of the emergency.
- Gather information from all aspects of the emergency for use in making appropriate decisions about the management of the emergency.
- Assess the emergency situation and assign tasks based on the overall needs for managing the emergency.
- Stay in contact with the leaders of the emergency service agencies and the law enforcement agencies working with the emergency.
- Authorize the release of information to the public.
- Keep the School Board informed of emergency status.
- Receive dignitaries who come to help or gather information.
- Report immediately to the local hospital if students or adults are being sent to that hospital for treatment. If more than one hospital is admitting students or adults, coordinate the communication among those hospitals and the school division. Assign and direct other division staff to assist at those hospitals.
- Coordinate communication between the hospital and the division office.
- Meet and talk with the parents of students and spouses of adults who have been admitted to the hospital.
- Notify risk management of emergency.
- Establish and maintain lines of communication between the division and the emergency site; for off-campus emergency, lines of communication must be established for the involved school, as well. Such lines of communication may also include couriers.
- Assign resources (persons and materials) to various sites for specific needs.
- Communicate with other schools in the division during the emergency period.

- After other schools have closed, assign those principals to sites and tasks that will benefit the division's attempts to manage the emergency.
- Authorize purchase of outside services and materials needed for the management of emergency situations.

Related Reading

"When Tragedy Strikes," by Timothy D. Snyder in The Executive Educator, July 1993.
"When Crisis Strikes: Don't Let Disaster Send Your School into a Tailspin," by Melissa Caudle in The Executive Educator, November 1994.
"School Crisis Response: "Expecting the Unexpected," by Robert Lichtenstein, David J. Schonfeld, and Marsha Kline in Educational Leadership, November 1994.

Student Services Roles

- Implement plan for crisis; authorize and coordinate back-up support personnel from other schools to assist, as needed, at crisis site(s).
- Maintain active file of helping agencies within the community; the names of contact person will be included.
- Maintain active file of community persons, such as counselors, doctors, psychologists, ministers; information regarding services and follow-up services will be included.
- Create letters to notify parents of continuing care that is available to students; available care will include local and state agencies, as well as school-based care.
- Develop information sheet for parents, teachers, and others; information will include topics such as talking with students, signs of depression, and others relating to crisis stress.
- Assist with planning and conducting parent/community meetings for information dissemination and postvention activities.
- Maintain follow-up activities such as referrals for help outside the school services setting.
- Confer with full staff and faculty; assist in coordination of briefings for staff and faculty.
- Make recommendations regarding the restarting of school and schedule of activities for the day after the crisis.

Community Relations Roles

- Collect and disseminate information to the media. Be aware of deadlines, the need for information accuracy, and other issues related to the media and the performance of their jobs.

- Plan and coordinate press interviews to help the news media meet deadlines.

- Create and disseminate press releases.

- Respond to rumors through the dissemination of accurate information. Organize a network of key people (police, fire, health) within the community through which accurate information can be disseminated.

- Be aware of the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and provide all appropriate information based on those requirements.

- Plan and coordinate the use of the Division's cable television channel for live and taped presentations. Press conferences can go out live; updates for the public can be taped and aired as needed.

- Coordinate information to be shared with school and division personnel during and after the crisis.

- Act as a liaison between the media and division personnel whose attention must be focused on the immediate problems of managing the crisis without constant interruption.

- Arrange interviews for the media with key school and division staff who are involved in the emergency or who act as spokespersons for the division.

- Establish and maintain a clearinghouse for calls and requests from schools, the community, parents, and the media and refer those to the appropriate person or place.

Facilities and Services Roles

- Coordinate with transportation coordinator as needed.
- Serve as a liaison between the emergency school site and the emergency support teams that may be needed.
- Coordinate and direct communication between the emergency site and county and state agencies.
- Obtain and direct the placement of generators when power must be restored for a temporary period.
- Coordinate and direct the acquisition of water when there is a disruption of water and sewer services.
- Coordinate and direct contact with emergency medical services, local police and sheriffs departments, fire departments, and the highway patrol.
- Coordinate and direct search-and-rescue operations when needed.
- Arrange for the delivery of outside services and materials needed for the management of the emergency.
- Plan and initiate arrangements for food for building personnel.

Related Reading

Check out these ASCD Publications!

How to Prepare and Respond to a Crisis by Robert Lichtenstein, David J. Schonfeld, Marsha Kline and Dee Speese-Linehan. (1995, 64 pages, $6.95)
Reducing School Violence Through Conflict Resolution by David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson. (1995, 125 pages, $15.95)
Discipline with Dignity by Richard Curwin and Allen Mendler. (1988, 267 pages, $9.95, available in Spanish)

Human Resources Role

- Maintain and initiate contacts for inservice, insurance, workers' compensation, and other staff services.
- Assist with identification of all injured and missing students and adults involved in the emergency.
- Assist with notification of parents of students and spouses of staff who are involved in the emergency.
- Check staff records for all injured to determine special medical needs that may be on file.
- Supervise the collection of information about those involved in the emergency.
- Supervise the emergency communications network.
- Be aware of the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and provide all appropriate information based on those requirements.
- Coordinate media releases with Director of Community Relations.

Transportation Role

- Establish and maintain school division protocols for transportation-related emergencies.
- Provide division-wide training for bus drivers.
- Establish and maintain plans for the emergency transport of students and school personnel (a chemical spill, for example).
- Coordinate transportation plans with State Police and other law enforcement personnel, as appropriate.

Technology/Information Services Role

- Coordinate use of technology.
- Assist in establishment/maintenance of emergency communications network.
- Develop plan and scenarios in which division technological resources can be dispersed effectively to emergency sites.
- Prepare and maintain an emergency kit that contains floor plans, telephone line locations, computer locations, and other communications equipment.
- Establish and maintain computer communication with the central office and with other agencies capable of such communication.
- Establish and maintain a stand-alone computer with student and staff database for use at the emergency site. Assist in obtaining needed student and staff information from the computer files.
- Supervise the use of the school computer system for communication with the district office and electronic bulletin board system.
- As needed, report various sites involved in the communication system if there are problems in that system.
- Provide technical support for all communications hardware and software.

Leadership at the Individual School Level

Leadership of the Principal is crucial for effective Crisis Management. As the highest level executive in the school, the Principal bears responsibility for all decisions and activities. Leadership involves primarily making crisis management a priority and communicating about its importance — *what is important to the Principal becomes important to everyone at the school.*

The role of the principal is critical in the development of a positive school climate and a safe school. Principals who have succeeded in creating safe and peaceful schools out of violence-ridden campuses:

- emphasize the importance of maintaining a high profile as well as individual and group contacts with students (Greenbaum, Turner, and Stephens, 1989).
- walk the halls and school grounds regularly (a considerable deterrent to crime and violence).
- frequently visit classrooms.
- always make themselves available to teachers, students, and parents who wish to meet with them.
- keep in touch with formal and informal student leaders to get their perspectives on school events and to enlist their support in involving students in school activities.

The School Crisis Guide advises principals to:
- *remain highly visible*
- *address the media personally*
- *contact the parents of affected students*
- *address all parents when warranted*

(Petersen & Straub, 1992)

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Principals Assume Leadership for Crises Management Planning

The National School Safety Center recommends the following actions for crisis preparation:

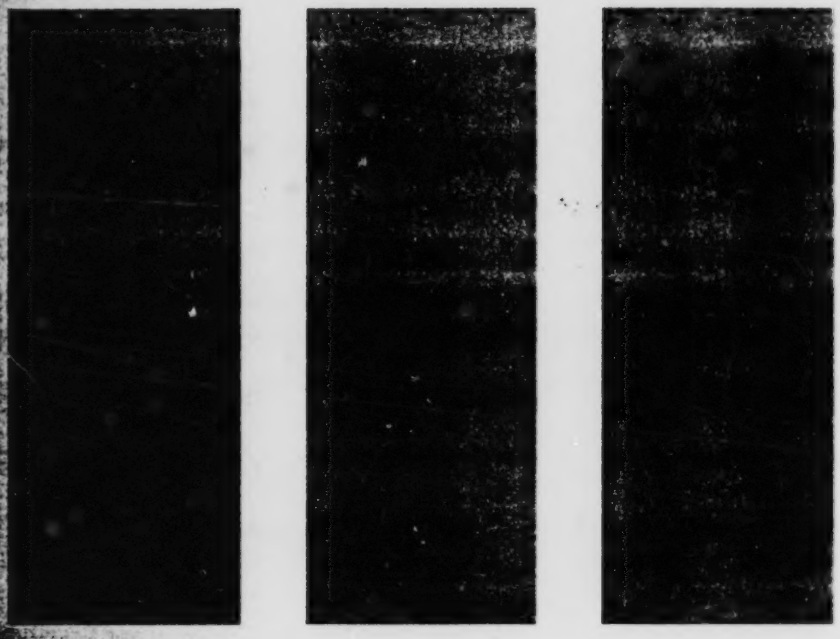
- Review district-wide emergency policies
- Identify community resources
- Establish a clear chain of command
- Identify a command post
- Appoint a crisis response team
- Assign roles
- Establish inservice training program
- Establish a warning signal
- Prepare an emergency kit
- Establish procedures to identify wounded or dead
- Prepare students
- Develop plans for
  - —Transportation
  - —Crowd control
  - —Student release
  - —Evacuation

—National School Safety Center, 1995

Related Reading

Check out this NASSP Publication!

Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners (1995) - a joint effort of the National Association of Secondary School Principals and DynCorp.



Establishing the Crisis Response Team

Three Levels of Response •
Roles and Responsibilities •

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Three Levels of Response

A school Crisis Response Team can be a highly effective organizational unit for dealing with a variety of crises such as accidents, drug overdoses, suicides, incidents of violence, and even weather emergencies. Crisis Response Teams in a school system can operate at three levels: individual building, central office, and community response teams. Well-functioning teams at each level provide a network that can take action whenever a crisis arises.

Building Level Crisis Response Team

The building-level team usually is led by the principal, with an alternate leader designated in the principal's absence. In addition to teachers, the team might include a coach, guidance counselor, school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, school security personnel, school secretary, and custodian. The team typically has responsibility for the following:

1. Establishing a protocol for dealing with crises.

2. Establishing a systematic approach for identifying, referring, and intervening with students identified as at-risk for suicide or other destructive behaviors.

3. Orienting staff to procedures and training to fulfill designated roles, including conducting drills.

4. Providing information to students, staff, and community on Crisis Management referral procedures.

5. Providing assistance during a crisis in accordance with designated roles; providing follow-up activities.

6. Conducting debriefing at the conclusion of each crisis episode to critique the effectiveness of the building's Crisis Management Plan.

7. Conducting periodic reviews and updating of the Crisis Management Plan; conducting related updated staff training.

Central Office Crisis Network

In addition to Crisis Response Teams at each school building, the crisis network should include a team at the central office level. This team might include the Superintendent or someone designated by the Superintendent, a representative of each school crisis team, administrator(s) for school security, and for pupil services, including school psychology and social work supervisors. It might also include consultants outside the school system. The central office crisis network would have responsibility for the following:

1. Overseeing and coordinating the building level teams.

2. Authorizing resources for areas where they are most needed; for example, providing more counselors to a school whose staff may be overburdened in dealing with a crisis.

3. Collecting and disseminating educational materials to schools for training crisis team members and faculty.

4. Establishing a central library of materials on violence, suicide, and other crisis management issues for use by faculty, staff, and students.

5. Conducting mock crisis event to test the crisis management procedures.

6. Evaluating responses to crises with a report to the Superintendent and a plan for follow-up.

7. Establishing a community support team and encouraging input and support from its members.

An example of detailed descriptions of the roles for central office staff during a school emergency is included in Chapter II.

Community Support Network

This component of the crisis network includes representatives from community and government agencies. This network might include personnel from mental health and law enforcement agencies, emergency medical personnel, and specialized resources such as domestic violence shelters, rape, runaway, and victim's advocacy services.

Schools should maintain periodic contact with community agencies and organizations and invite them to participate in meetings with school Crisis Management Teams.

Related Reading

Poland, S. (1994). The role of school crisis intervention teams to prevent and reduce school violence and trauma. School Psychology Review, 23(2), 175-189.

Expertise Needed on a Crisis Response Team

Principal — Highest level executive in the school; carries responsibility for all decisions and actions.

Principal's assistant or designee — Important to designate, should a crisis occur during the principal's absence. Must be someone who commands respect, authority and trust.

Guidance counselor — Should be trained in students' reactions to crisis, emotional stages of grief, and group dynamics.

Faculty member — Should have respect of co-workers and students and be a teacher who knows the climate of school and is comfortable being a member of Crisis Response Team.

Security personnel — Safety of students and staff is the first priority when violence occurs.

School psychologist — Can provide important information on psychological responses to crises and assist with intervention and postvention support.

School nurse — Can provide information and expertise about physical symptoms of shock; instrumental in coordination of assistance when injuries are involved.

School social worker — Knowledgeable about community and can assist in accessing needed services; can assist with intervention and family contacts.

Characteristics of the effective Crisis Response Team member:

- *A broad perspective on life*
- *Flexibility*
- *Familiarity with the nuances of your school, its student body and its community*
- *Willingness to problem-solve cooperatively*
- *An ability to anticipate multiple consequences*
- *And an ability to think clearly under stress*

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Roles & Responsibilities

Building Level Roles and Responsibilities

— Adapted from Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991

A. Principal -

The Principal will coordinate and supervise emergency management activities at the school. His/Her assignments include:

1. Providing continuity of administration.
2. Developing of a comprehensive school emergency management program.
3. Designating and training a school Crisis Team.
4. Designating and preparing emergency operations center or command post.
5. Monitor developing situations such as weather conditions, civil unrest, or incidents in the community that may impact the school.
6. Keeping county officials, division staff, and school personnel informed of developing situations and initiate emergency notifications and warnings.
7. Directing emergency operations.
8. Implementing evacuation procedures and measures to control access to affected area.
9. Coordinating use of building as public shelter for emergencies occurring in the county.
10. Assessing damage.
11. Coordinating of disaster assistance recovery.

B. Crisis Team -

The Crisis Team is trained in intervention and postvention procedures. Team members include the principal, counselor, teachers, school nurse, school social worker, and school psychologist. The team has the responsibility to:

1. Develop and implement procedures for prevention, intervention, and postvention at all grade levels.
2. Establish a systematic approach to identifying, referring, and assessing students at risk of suicide or other behavior that would endanger themselves or others.
3. Disseminate information to students, staff and community on referral procedures.
4. Provide training for teachers and staff. Conduct drills.
5. Assist the Principal in controlling emergency operations.

C. Teachers

Teachers are responsible for implementing appropriate procedures to protect students. These responsibilities include:

1. Evacuation - Establish procedures for evacuation. Prepare "classroom emergency kit." Direct and supervise evacuation of students to designated safe area.
2. Student assembly - Grade or department chairpersons are responsible for maintaining order in the pre-designated safe area.
3. Student accounting - Verify the location and status of every student. Report to the principal or his/her designee on the condition of any student who needs additional assistance.
4. Establish a partner system to pair teachers and classes so that some teachers can assist with other tasks such as first aid, search and rescue, or community relations.
5. Remain with assigned students throughout the duration of the emergency unless otherwise assigned through the partner system or until every student has been released through the official "student release process."

D. Office Manager (Secretary) -

The administrative secretarial staff has primary responsibility for emergency communications, including exchange of information with school division staff, community emergency responders (fire, police, EMS), and internal communication within the school building. The Office Manager and office assistants also have primary responsibility for record keeping.

1. Establish procedures for emergency communications with school division staff in compliance with division emergency plan.
2. Establish internal emergency communications procedures including provisions for two-way communications with classrooms and with classes on the playground or other sites.
3. In an emergency, establish and maintain communications with school division.
4. Establish and maintain communications with city emergency services personnel, as needed.
5. Initiate and maintain incident log.
6. Take appropriate action to notify medical teams and search teams.
7. Report status of school and students to division as specified.
8. Compile information for Public Information Officer, as requested.

E. Head Custodian -

The custodial staff is familiar with the operations and infrastructure of the school building and is responsible for stabilization of the building, controlling access, and securing the school facilities. Duties include:

1. Inventory all hazardous materials, portable and fixed equipment, and utility lines in or near the school building.
2. Establish procedures for isolating hazardous areas.
3. In an emergency, survey damage and structural stability of the buildings and utilities and report to the control center.
4. Search the affected sections of the school for students or staff that may be confined or injured.
5. Implement building access control measures.
6. Distribute supplies to student assembly areas.
7. Assist city officials in damage assessment.
8. Assist administrators in recovery procedures.

Crisis Response Team *Danger Signs*

- No plan
- Outdated plan
- Inflexible people
- Too many leaders
- No leader
- Unmanaged media
- Delay in initial report
- Rushed response
- "Lone ranger"
- Rescue fantasy
- Turf battles
- Secrets
- Gossip, rumors
- "Hype"
- Denial

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Who's in charge when the Principal is away?

It is understood that the principal of a school is charged with responsibility of students and staff. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the principal to designate a certified staff member to be responsible and to make decisions during a crisis during his/her absence. It is advisable to:

- develop a list of persons in charge of the building in the principal's absence and keep the list in accessible locations; inform building staff of who has been designated.

- ensure that persons in charge have participated in crisis management training, have copies of any crisis management guides, and are familiar with applicable procedures.

IV

Developing the School Crisis Management Plan

Preparation •
Crisis Response •
Postvention •
Suicide •

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Preparation

Preparing for Crises: Essential Activities

A school that is prepared before a crisis occurs will be much more likely to deal with students and staff effectively. An unprepared school is asking for chaos. In setting up a Crisis Management Plan, the following activities are important:

1. Decide who will be in charge during a crisis.

A crucial first step in crisis management planning is to decide who will be in charge during a crisis. Assign one person to provide leadership during emergency situations, to organize activities, and to disseminate information. Usually the person in charge is the principal or assistant principal.

Designate a substitute in the event that the designated person is unavailable at the time of the emergency. It is extremely important that all staff and students know who these people are. Identification badges can be helpful.

2. Select your Crisis Response Team.

A second important step is to recruit members for your Crisis Response Team. Typically, the Crisis Response Team will consist of an administrator, nurse, psychologist, school social worker, teachers, counselors, support staff representative, and others with skills appropriate to the tasks to be performed. Sometimes forgotten, but important in crises are the school secretary/office manager and the head custodian. Most, if not all, of your team members must be present full time at the school — or able to respond immediately to a phone call. The team may include adjunct members who can be called, as needed. These might include police juvenile/school liaison officers, health or mental health crisis services.

3. Develop clear and consistent policies and procedures.

It is absolutely critical to develop policies and supporting procedures that provide all staff with clear guidelines for tasks and responsibilities during crises and emergencies. This also ensures that all staff will respond consistently in each situation. It is important to include policies and procedures by which children will be released to their caregivers.

Sometimes forgotten, but important in crises are the school secretary/office manager and the head custodian.

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4. Provide training for the Crisis Response Team

A suggested agenda for training the team is provided in Chapter VI, pages 132-133.

5. Establish a law enforcement liaison.

This is often established at the school division level. One person from the school system is designated with whom the police can communicate. This person can be telephoned night or day to report a crisis and to exchange relevant information that can be released. This person, in turn, will contact key people in the schools. Having accurate information from the police allows school personnel to quell rumors that frequently arise when a crisis occurs.

6. Establish a media liaison and identify suitable facilities where reporters can work and news conferences can be held.

Many school districts have a community or public relations spokesperson to whom all media requests are referred. Know who this person is, and communicate with him/her to establish procedures for responding to the media in times of crisis.

7. Establish a working relationship with community health agencies and other resource groups.

To facilitate quick and collaborative responses, strong relationships with community agencies must be established prior to a crisis. A list of suggested community support services is included below.

8. Set up "phone trees."

Critical information needs to be communicated as quickly as possible to those in need. The complexity of the phone tree will depend on the size of the community and its school system. A sample phone tree is included on page 110.

9. Plan to make space available for community meetings and for outside service providers involved in crisis management.

Designate school sites and include potential alternative sites in the community when space is not available at the school.

Having accurate information from the police allows school personnel to quell rumors that frequently arise when a crisis occurs.

10. Develop necessary forms and information sheets.

Develop record-keeping forms to assist in the management of crisis situations. You may need to translate any materials for families into languages appropriate for your school community. A variety of sample forms, letters, etc. are included in this Resource Guide.

11. Develop a plan for emergency coverage of classes.

Teachers who will play significant roles in a crisis response need to be assured that their classrooms will be covered. Consider Central Office and your PTA as possible sources of assistance in coverage.

12. Establish a code to alert staff.

Establish a code (a number, word, or phrase) that can be used over the public address system or in notes to alert staff as to the nature of a crisis without unduly alarming the rest of the school.

13. Develop a collection of readings.

The district office or school librarian should develop a bibliography of books pertinent to crisis situations for students and staff. See Appendix B of this Resource Guide for a list of Books for Students, Staff, and Parents.

14. Have school attorney review crisis response procedures and forms.

Adjust procedures to comply with any liability concerns.

15. Hold a practice "crisis alert" session.

Prepare staff members for their responsibilities in a real crisis. Through role playing, staff can become aware of potential problems and discuss how to respond to them.

16. Hold an annual in-service meeting on general crisis intervention.

Annual in-service meetings need to be conducted for all school staff. Such in-service meetings should include information on building procedures, suicide, rape, and natural disasters. A suggested outline for this in-service is included in Chapter VI: Training and Maintaining Preparedness.

"The worst time to prepare for a crisis is after it has already occurred."

from Staying Safe at School: Survival Skills for Teachers

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Your School is Prepared for Crisis - True or False?

How are you doing on the crisis management front? Are you prepared if disaster strikes — or just hoping that it won't?

Directions
Answer "true" or "false" to each of the following 25 items. Be honest in your responses.

_____ 1. My school has a crisis plan.
_____ 2. A crisis won't happen to me or occur on my campus.
_____ 3. There are established guidelines for school personnel to follow for disruptive students and gang activity.
_____ 4. There are established written guidelines and procedures for natural disasters, medical emergencies, and for mechanical breakdowns.
_____ 5. In the last school year, there has been a major crisis in my school.
_____ 6. In the last school year, there has been a major crisis in my district.
_____ 7. In the last school year, there has been a major crisis in a school in my state.
_____ 8. Crises sometimes occur on or near school grounds.
_____ 9. The neighborhood in which my school is located is near where drug deals frequently are made.
_____ 10. Visitors are screened, required to sign in, and are issued passes while on school grounds.
_____ 11. Emergency supplies are kept on hand and up-to-date.
_____ 12. There is a system in place to alert all staff members of a major crisis, which enacts a "stay-put ruling" until further notice from the principal.
_____ 13. If a student handed any staff member a loaded gun or if a staff member found a gun on campus, staff members would know the proper procedures associated with gun safety.
_____ 14. Parents can be contacted quickly in emergency situations.
_____ 15. Vandalism occurs frequently to school property.
_____ 16. Lockers are assigned to all students.
_____ 17. My school adheres to a strict dress code and book bag policy — that is, clear or mesh book bags, no colors for gang identification, etc.
_____ 18. There is an emergence of gangs in my community both for girls and boys.
_____ 19. At least 20 percent of the students enrolled in my school have prior arrest records or are currently on probation.
_____ 20. Students have been reporting that they are afraid to come to school because they fear personal harm.
_____ 21. My school's truancy, suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates are increasing.
_____ 22. My school employs one of the following: monitors, security guards, or resource officers.
_____ 23. Drugs and weapons are accessible to students within a 20-minute radius of the school.
_____ 24. My school has a trained crisis-response team.
_____ 25. More than 35 percent of the students enrolled in my school are from single-parent families or are enrolled in special education.

Scoring
Give yourself 1 point for each time you answered "true," and determine where you fit in the descriptions given below.

- From 19 to 25 points: Experienced and realistic. Chances are you either experienced a crisis, or there has been one in your school district. You fully comprehend the need for crisis management planning. Guidelines are probably in place, but not necessarily in a well-defined plan. You have researched the areas of crisis planning and crisis teams. Keep working toward improving your existing policies and guidelines, for your crisis team, and train your team and staff. Evaluate all existing procedures using a comprehensive approach. This might be the time to bring in resource agencies to review the plan you already have and to consult with experts in the field.

- From 13 to 18 points: Thinking, but unprepared. Chances are you believe crises can occur on school grounds, but your school and district have been fortunate enough to have escaped one. You realize the need for crisis planning, and you have general policies about crisis management, but you don't have a comprehensive crisis management plan. Put together a crisis-planning task force and develop written policies and procedures that will become part of your comprehensive plan. Constantly revise the plans you develop.

- From 7 to 12 points: At risk. Chances are you have policies that deal with minor incidents, and your campus is typically quiet. Few if any fights occur; your major concerns are tardiness, truancy, and improving standardized test scores. Your staff members believe everything is all right and whatever happens will be handled. But you might as well play Russian roulette with a .38-calibre pistol. A crisis is likely be just around the corner. Develop a plan, research other schools' plans, and formulate a crisis team. Read everything you can find on crisis management and attend as many seminars as possible.

- From 0 to 6 points: The not-me syndrome. You probably believe crises happen only in other schools, in other districts, or better yet, out of state. You are totally unprepared to deal with a major crisis. How can you? You don't believe a crisis can happen, so you have put no thought into what you would do if one occurred. But the time bomb is ticking. Get help immediately. Get a plan of any kind and review it. Develop one for your school without delay — as if your life and your students' depend on it.

—Adapted from a survey developed by Melissa Caudle and published in The Executive Educator, November 1994.

Checklist

Crisis Management Planning Checklist

- ❒ Define crisis for your school.
- ❒ Decide who will be in charge during a crisis.
- ❒ Select your Crisis Response Team.
- ❒ Develop appropriate policies and procedures for handling crisis situations: Before it happens. When it happens. Post-crisis follow-up.
- ❒ Train the Crisis Response Team.
- ❒ Establish a law enforcement liaison.
- ❒ Establish a media liaison and plan for communicating with media.
- ❒ Establish a working relationship with community service providers and develop a list of telephone numbers and contact persons.
- ❒ Set up phone trees.
- ❒ Create or reserve space for service providers involved in crisis management and for community meetings.
- ❒ Develop and print forms to assist in crisis management.
- ❒ Develop a plan for emergency coverage of classes.
- ❒ Establish a code to alert staff.
- ❒ Develop a collection of readings.
- ❒ Obtain legal review of crisis response procedures and forms.
- ❒ Hold a practice crisis alert.
- ❒ Establish procedures for annual in-service of new staff and update/review for all staff.

Samples

A form such as the following can be used to inventory skills which may be helpful in a crisis:

Crisis Management Planning
STAFF SKILLS INVENTORY

Name:_____ Room #: _____

Please check any of the following in which you have expertise or training:

Emergency response:

❒ First aid ❒ Search & Rescue ❒ Law Enforcement Source

❒ CPR ❒ CB Radio ❒ Ham Radio

❒ EMT ❒ Emergency Management ❒ Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

❒ Firefighting ❒ Other: _____

❒ Mobile or Cellular Phone, Type: _____

❒ Bi/multilingual Language(s): _____

Using information gathered in the inventory above, lists such as the following can be developed:

•STAFF WITH SKILLS IN MEDICAL CARE

Name Room # Training/certification

_____

_____

_____

•BI/MULTILINGUAL STAFF MEMBERS

Name Room # Language(s)

_____

_____

_____

•STAFF MEMBERS WITH COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING/EQUIPMENT

Name Room # Training/Equipment

_____

_____

_____

Samples

Designation of Staff Assignments/Activity Sites

Assignment	Title/Name	Site(s)
Decision Making/Control		
	1. *Principal* _____	_____
	2. *Ass't Principal* _____	_____
Crisis Team		
	1. *Coordinator* _____	_____
	2. *Substitute Coord.* _____	_____
Communications/Notification		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____
Evacuation and Sheltering		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____
Student Accounting and Release		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____
Building Safety/Security		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____
Information (Telephone and "Walk-Ins")		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____
Family Contact/Visitation		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____
Coordinate assistance for emergency/medical response		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____
Support counseling for staff/students		
	1. _____	_____
	2. _____	_____

Samples

Students/Staff Who Need Special Assistance in Evacuation

Name	Assistance Needed

Samples

Sample 1: Crisis Management "Toolbox"

❒ Responsibilities checklist — who does what.

❒ Faculty/staff roster with 1) emergency phone numbers and 2) indicating those with first aid, CPR, and/or EMT training

❒ School map with location of 1) exits, 2) school phones or other telecommunications equipment, and 3) first aid kits

❒ Blueprints of school building(s), including utilities

❒ Map of evacuation route(s)

❒ Keys to all doors in the school facility.

❒ Phone lists:

— Community Emergency Numbers

General emergency number - 911
Ambulance
Poison Control Center
Local Hospitals
Police Department/Sheriff/State Police
Fire Department

— School Numbers

Extension numbers for school security, school health nurse, guidance services and other support staff.

— Other Resource Numbers

Home/work telephone numbers of parent networks, school volunteers, local clergy, and other resources previously identified.

❒ Student roster including phone numbers for parents.

❒ Master schedule.

❒ Name tags and sign-in sheet for crisis response team members and community resource people.

❒ Sample statements/letters for use in notifying faculty, students, and parents about crisis incident.

❒ Crisis response equipment (such as two-way radios or cellular telephones).

❒ Facial tissues.

Samples

Sample 2: Emergency Management Kit

The following items are listed as basic for creating and maintaining Emergency Management Kits. The list includes specific items that may save time in implementing a school plan to manage emergencies. Additional items may be needed by individual schools and those should be added to the emergency kit, as well.

- ❒ 10 legal pads (5 x 11 and 4 x 5)
- ❒ 10 ball point pens (not felt tip and not pencils)
- ❒ 10 magic markers
- ❒ 1,000 plain white peel-off stickers (to be used to identify injured students or adults at the emergency site)
- ❒ list of telephone numbers for the Central Office, local law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, fire department, and other agencies that may need to know of a school crisis
- ❒ list of telephone numbers for the portable telephones used by division staff
- ❒ list of FAX lines at the division offices
- ❒ local telephone directory
- ❒ list of beeper numbers for division staff
- ❒ current staff directory
- ❒ floor plan that shows the location of all exits, all telephones and telephone wall jacks, computer locations, and all other devices that may be useful in communication during an emergency
- ❒ fully charged battery operated bullhorn
- ❒ for all off-campus trips, a map showing the route to be travelled to and from the off-campus destination
- ❒ for all off-campus trips, a list of students and adults on each bus or vehicle should be left at the school; students and adults must ride the same bus both ways
- ❒ list of assigned roles for school personnel and division personnel
- ❒ recent lists of students who ride buses, given by bus/route number
- ❒ summary of information that can be made public during an emergency; include Freedom of Information summary, division policy, and others
- ❒ names of crisis intervention team members

Samples

Emergency Dismissal/Evacuation: Two Samples

Parent Procedures for Picking Up Children in a Crisis
In a letter to parents, mailed in September of each year, the school should inform parents as to the proper procedures to follow in picking up a child/children in a crisis situation, such as tornado, chemical spill, or other crisis.

Among the types of information that might be contained in the letter are:

- Specifications indicating that school is one of the safest places that students may be located during most crises or natural disasters.
- Instructions showing that students will be kept at school until the crisis is determined to be over.
- Instructions emphasizing that students will be released to parents who come get them.
- Instructions NOT to phone the school and tie-up the few telephone lines that will be needed for emergency use.
- Instructions emphasizing that when a person other than the parent comes to get a student, the building administrator will first check with the student and that a record is kept as to the person picking up the student; if there is any doubt that a parent does not want the student released, then the student will be kept at school.

"A clear, well-organized plan may mean the difference between level-headed actions and solutions or danger and panic."

Education Public Relations, School Safety 101

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Samples

Evacuation Partner School/Facility

If it becomes necessary to evacuate the school building(s), the Principal, in consultation with the School Superintendent, may decide to transport the students and staff to another county school. The designated partner school is listed below. This partnership is reciprocal so that if an emergency occurred at the partner school, this school would host students from that school.

This partnership is designed to avoid the problems and liability of dismissing and sending young children home early without proper supervision. This decision will be influenced by many related conditions at the time of the incident — including the time of day, season of the year, urgency of the evacuation, and weather or civil conditions in the community.

The receiving school will use the gymnasium, cafeteria, library or other common area to house the evacuated students for the remainder of the school day. Bus schedules must be adjusted to accommodate these circumstances.

Partner School: _____

Name: _____

Location: _____

Principal: _____

Assistant Principal: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Capacity: _____

Bus Schedule: _____

Developing a Severe Weather Emergency Plan for Your School

Designate a Plan Coordinator
Select a staff member who has an interest in weather and who is willing to attend a local National Weather Service spotter training program.

Set Up an In-School Weather Information Center
Use a tonal alert National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio.
Locate the weather radio near the person responsible for enacting the plan.
Display a map showing local counties and towns; use to locate storms and track their movement in reference to your school.

Establish a Method of Alerting Teachers and Students
Use a PA system with back-up alerting device such as a compressed air horn or megaphone.
Provide wireless communication devices, such as walkie-talkies, for detached buildings and gymnasiums.
Make arrangements for handicapped students or others needing assistance.

Identify Tornado and High Wind Safety Zones Within the School
Get recommendations from an engineer or architect.
Locate areas of best protection: small interior rooms, bathrooms, windowless interior hallways (with short roof spans).
Stay away from areas of highest probability of failure: exterior walls and windows, rooms with large roof spans, upper level rooms, roof, interior glass, non-load bear walls, mobile classrooms.

Set Guidelines for Activating the Severe Weather Plan
- Thunder: Delay outdoor activities.
- Tornado or Severe Thunderstorm Watch: Postpone outdoor activities, move students from mobile classrooms and gymnasiums, post school personnel trained in spotting severe weather to watch the storms as they approach, move students from areas with skylights.
- Tornado Warning: Should your school be in the storm path, enact an immediate "call to action." Before the storm arrives, begin moving students from unsafe areas, post a trained employee to act as a storm spotter. Move all students to tornado safe areas. If winds begin to pick up, have students and teachers drop immediately into the protective position.

Plan for Special Problems
Consider what to do if classes are changing, students are at lunch, or the buses are about to leave as the storm threatens.
Make arrangements for disconnecting the gas and electricity.

Practice the Severe Weather Emergency Plan
Conduct drills in September and March.
Coordinate drills with a severe weather education and awareness program.

Off-Campus Activities

Off-campus activities, including field trips, are routine and important parts of the educational experience. Procedures and practices which are helpful in the event of an accident or other emergency include the following:

1. *Use of name tags/personal identification* - note that these need to be worn on blouses or shirts rather than outer garments such as sweaters and coats which may be removed on long bus trips. Write-bracelets might be considered, particularly for younger children.

2. *A route map and itinerary* should be left at the school.

3. *Students, staff, and chaperones* should leave and return in the same vehicle; a roster of riders in each vehicle should be left at the school before departure.

Bus Emergency Kit

- Pencils
- Paper
- Stick-on name tags
- Phone number list
- Rider roster *(students, staff, chaperones)*
- First aid kit
- Signs to display bus numbers
- Route maps
- Area maps
- Emergency telephone numbers:

—*emergency medical services*
—*district office (including beeper numbers, if applicable)*
—*law enforcement (State Police)*
—*local hospital*

Related Reading

Reducing School Violence: Building a Framework for School Safety (1996). Produced by SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education and the Florida Department of Education.
–Available from SERVE, Tallahassee, FL. (904)671-6000.
"Teacher Group Urges U. S. to Quell School Violence," by Kevin O'Brien, The Charlotte Observer, 1/15/93.

Crisis Response

Procedures for General Crisis Intervention

Source: Association of California School Administrators

Unanticipated events, such as suicides, school bus crashes, natural disasters, or multiple injuries or deaths, can quickly escalate into a schoolwide catastrophe if not dealt with immediately and effectively. Knowing what to do if such a crisis occurs will minimize the chaos, rumors, and the impact of the event on the other students. As a reminder, for the purposes of this manual, crisis is defined as:

A sudden, generally unanticipated event that profoundly and negatively affects a significant segment of the school population and often involves serious injury or death.

The following procedures should be implemented if a schoolwide crisis occurs. A General Crisis Intervention Checklist is provided at the end of this section to help you track the actions taken.

Immediately Following Notification of Crisis

The school administrator or designee should implement the following procedures when the school is notified of a near-death or fatal crisis situation:

Tell the person providing the information not to repeat it elsewhere in the school. Explain the school's need to verify the information and have any announcement of the event come from the designated school administrator. If there is concern regarding the likelihood of compliance with this request, it may be useful to keep the reporting person in the office (or have that person come into the office if he or she called the information) until appropriate steps can be taken.

Tell office staff members NOT to repeat or give out any information within or outside school until specifically instructed to do so. Have them direct all inquiries to the administrator or designee until told otherwise. In school using student office help, it may be useful to request that only adults answer the school telephone for the remainder of the day.

In case of reporting student death, verify the reported incident by calling the police liaison or coroner. DO NOT DISTURB THE AFFECTED STUDENT'S FAMILY.

Crisis:
A sudden, generally unanticipated event that profoundly and negatively affects a significant segment of the school population and often involves serious injury

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The timing of the notification of a crisis may alter the order of the initial steps taken. For example, if the school is notified in the morning, all procedures should be implemented on that day with emergency faculty meetings scheduled for lunch and after school. If notification is received at night or on the weekend, ask the person providing the information not to spread the information further until the situation is verified, and proceed with #3. Continue through the remaining general crisis intervention procedures, instructing office staff as appropriate (#2) the following school day.

Following Verification of Crisis

The following actions are listed in a priority order. In actuality, several things will happen simultaneously. It is critical, however, that #1-10 occur BEFORE THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (#11) IS MADE.

Once verification of a crisis has occurred, the administrator and/or crisis response team designee(s) must attend to the following:

1. Notify the superintendent or other appropriate district administrator of the event. Have that person notify the media liaison if necessary.

2. Convene the Crisis Response Team. To not unnecessarily alarm others, use the coded message developed for these situations (e.g., "CRT members, please report to room 5," or "A CRT meeting will convene in room 5 in 10 minutes.")

3. Have an administrative assistant or other designee notify the school's social worker, psychologist, and/or counselors. If the affected student was in a special education or other special program, notify the appropriate program coordinator.

4. Assign Crisis Response Team members in the building to locate, gather, and inform closest friends of the deceased/injured and provide support. Pull this group together before the general announcement is made. If significant others are absent or out of the building, assure that a knowledgeable, supportive adult gives the news to them. With parent or guardian consent, have these absent students transported to the school if practical and appropriate.

5. Prepare a formal statement for initial announcement to the entire school. Include minimum details and note that additional information will be forthcoming. Also prepare statements for telephone inquiries.

6. Decide on a time for an emergency staff meeting and announce it over the public address system. Invite designated outside professionals to join the meeting to help staff members process their own reactions to the situation. A format for the staff meeting is at the end of these Procedures.

7. Identify students, staff, and parents likely to be most affected by the news (e.g., due to their relationship to the deceased/injured, recent or anticipated family losses, personal history with similar crisis, recent confrontations with the affected student). These persons are targeted for additional support.

8. Determine if additional district/community resources are needed — or are needed to "stand by" — to effectively manage the crisis, and notify them if appropriate.

9. Assign team members in the building to:

   a. Provide grief support for students in designated building areas. Try to have more than one area available for this purpose. Have the adults on duty in these areas keep lists of students they see. Make sure the parents/guardians of these students are notified regarding the impact of the event on their children.

   b. Review and distribute guidelines to help teachers with classroom discussion.

   c. Stand in for any substitute teacher in the building or for any staff member unable or unwilling to deal with the situation during the announcement and subsequent discussion.

   d. Coordinate and greet all auxiliary support services staff members and take them to their assigned locations. Provide a sign-in/out sheet for them.

   e. Distribute the developed list of community resources to all classes.

   f. Assign a counselor, psychologist, social worker, or other designated staff member to follow a deceased student's class schedule for the remainder of the day if that will be helpful to teachers in those classes.

10. Station staff/student support members as planned prior to making the announcement.

11. Announce the crisis over the public address system or by delivering a typed statement to every classroom before the end of the period. Include locations of in-building support.

Once the announcement is made, assigned staff members will perform the following:

a. Monitor grounds for students leaving the building without permission. Redirect them to support services. If unable to intercept, notify a family member expressing the school's concern.

b. Notify parents of students closest to the deceased/injured and ask them to pick up their children at the end of the school day. Implement the evacuation plan previously developed to plan for masses of parents who will pick up their children.

c. Notify bus drivers — especially those who drive the buses usually traveled in by the injured or deceased student, or who are experiencing the most severe shock.

d. Notify feeder schools regarding siblings or other students predicted to be strongly affected.

e. Provide support to faculty and other staff members in the lounge. Provide private support to individual staff members identified in # 7.

f. Collect deceased student's belongings from his/her locker or other sites at the end of the day.

g. Officially withdraw a deceased student from the school attendance rolls.

The Staff Meeting

The school administrator and designated staff or community members must do the following at the first staff meeting during a school crisis:

a. Pass around a photograph of the deceased/injured student to familiarize staff with the student.

b. Review the facts of the crisis and dispel rumors.

c. Help staff members process their responses to the situation.

d. Describe the feelings that students may experience and suggest how teachers might handle specific situations.

e. Provide guidelines for helping students who are upset.

f. Encourage teachers to allow for expressions of grief, anger, etc., in the homeroom or class in which the announcement is received or in other classes throughout the day. Emphasize the acceptability/normalcy of a range of expressions. The guiding principle is to return to the normal routine as soon as possible within each class and within the school. The structure of routine provides security and comfort to all members of the school community.

g. Encourage staff to dispel rumors whenever possible and discourage any "glorification" of the event (especially in suicidal death).

h. Request staff to meet 30 minutes early the next morning to review procedures and debrief. If the crisis occurs on a Friday, call the meeting for the following Monday morning.

Related Reading

"Taken at Gunpoint" by Robert D. Chadbourne in The Executive Educator, November 1994.

Checklist

General Crisis Intervention Checklist

❒ Direct staff and others not to repeat information until verification is obtained.

❒ Notify superintendent.

❒ Convene Crisis Response Team and assign duties.

❒ Notify building support staff, such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

❒ Inform closest friends of the affected student and provide support.

❒ Prepare formal statement or announcement.

❒ Announce time and place of emergency staff meeting.

❒ Identify other/additional students, staff, and parents likely to be most affected by news.

❒ Assess need for additional community resources.

❒ Assign trained staff or community professionals to:

— Provide grief support to students;

— Review and distribute guidelines for classroom discussion to teachers;

— Stand in for absent/affected/substitute teacher; and

— Distribute lists of community resources.

❒ Make official announcement.

❒ Hold emergency staff meeting.

❒ As needed, assign team members and other staff to monitor grounds; notify parents, support staff, and feeder schools; provide support to staff; collect student belongings and withdraw student from school rolls.

Keeping a Log

Recordkeeping during a crisis may appear to be of secondary importance. It is not.

Having a record of information received, decisions made, and steps taken is important both during and after the crisis.

- During the crisis the log serves as a tool to share information among individuals or teams. As a crisis continues, staff members are likely to come and go; the log provides information critical to the smooth transfer to relief staff.
- During the crisis, the writer is forced to analyze what has occurred and to think more clearly. Such writing and clarifying issues assists in formulating and evaluating responses to crises.
- After the crisis, particularly if liability issues arise, having a log is critically important in placing a given action in its context, providing explanations, and justifying decisions. Additionally, a log is is useful tool for both post-incident debriefing and training.

Related Reading

"The Knife in the Book Bag," by Jon D. Hull, TIME, 2/8/93.

Checklist

Use During Crisis Response
to Monitor and Document Activities

Intervention Checklist/Flowchart

School _____ Date/Time Response Initiated _____

Description of Incident _____

Crisis Response Team Members (list those present) _____

_____

First Hour Response:

Task	Who	Completed	Notes
Verify/gather additional information:	_____	yes no	_____
Notify other Team members:	_____	yes no	_____
Notify police/emergency services:	_____	yes no Contacted:	_____ _____
Notify Superintendent/designee:	_____	yes no	_____
Identify most affected students/staff:	_____	yes no	_____
Identify space(s) for crisis mgt. activities:	_____	yes no	_____
Prepare public announcement(s):	_____	yes no	_____
Inform faculty/staff:	_____	yes no Method:	_____ _____
Alter bell/schedule:	_____	yes no	_____
Inform students, as appropriate: Which students?	_____ _____	yes no Method:	_____ _____
Establish day 1 crisis support:	_____	yes no	_____
Notify Parents: Which Parents?	_____ _____	yes no Method(s)	_____ _____
Schedule faculty meeting(s):	_____	yes no	_____
Conduct Day 1 debriefing; Plan for Day 2:	_____	yes no	_____

Crises Requiring Limited School Involvement

In certain crisis situations, a schoolwide response would be excessive and unnecessarily impact students. In other instances, law enforcement involvement may limit the school's ability to respond to the incident.

When suicide risk is present, or when attempted suicide or rape has occurred, a limited response by trained school staff and/or the Crisis Response Team should be all that is necessary to contain potential panic and reduce further risks. While these situations do not, of themselves, constitute a schoolwide crisis, inappropriate responses to these events can lead to chaos. In the case of a homicide or riot, a limited school-based response may be all that is possible due to law enforcement intervention.

The following pages describe effective responses in situations requiring limited school involvement if the crisis occurs during the summer or school year.

Crises Occurring During Summer or Off-Track

If a school administrator or other crisis response team member is notified of a crisis during the summer (or when affected students are off-track if they attend year-round schools), the response usually will be one of limited school involvement. In that case, the following steps should be taken:

1. Institute the phone tree to disseminate information to Crisis Response Team members and request a meeting of all available members.

2. Identify close friends/staff most likely to be affected by the crisis. Keep the list and recheck it when school reconvenes.

3. Notify staff or families of students identified in # 2 and recommend community resources for support.

4. Notify general faculty/staff by letter or telephone with appropriate information.

5. Schedule faculty meeting for an update the week before students return to school.

6. Be alert for repercussions among students and staff. When school reconvenes, check core group of friends and other at-risk students and staff, and institute appropriate support mechanisms and referral procedures.

Checklist

Crises that occur during vacation or when students are off-track require fewer responses from the school. Use the following checklist to ensure no steps are forgotten.

Off-Track/Summer Crisis Intervention Checklist

- ❒ Institute the phone tree to inform Crisis Response Team members.
- ❒ Identify and make a list of students and staff members most likely to be affected.
- ❒ Notify staff members or families of students identified and recommend community resource people who can provide support.
- ❒ Notify remaining staff with appropriate information by letter or telephone.
- ❒ Schedule faculty meeting for an update before affected students return to school.
- ❒ When school reconvenes, monitor students and staff members previously identified.
- ❒ Make appropriate referrals for students or staff members who need additional help.

Suggested Procedures for Handling Fights in School Settings

- Walk briskly — don't run
- Get help along the way
- Assess and evaluate:
  - — the number of students involved
  - — the size of students involved
  - — any weapons that are involved
  - — proximity of individuals who can assist
- Recognize that there may be several subtle things going on simultaneously that are being tangibly expressed in the conflict. Is there gang involvement? What other alliances might exist?
- Dismiss the audience
- Identify yourself to the fighters
- Call the student by name
- Stay away from the middle of the conflict
- Remove glasses
- Give specific commands in a firm, authoritative voice
- Defer to rules, not personal authority
- Separate the aggressor and the victim
- Avoid physical force if possible
- Remove participants to neutral locations
- Obtain identification
- Get medical attention if necessary
- Describe incident in writing
- Debrief relevant teacher(s)
- Provide protection and support for victims
- Provide counseling — not simply the day after the event, but as long as necessary
- Report incident to law enforcement and other child serving agencies who may be serving the youngster.

— Source: National School Safety Center, 1995

Samples

Example of report to document Crisis Management; typically submitted to Superintendent/division-level designee:

Crises Response Team Report

School_____ Date of Report_____

Student(s)'s Name(s): _____ Parent/guardian_____

Description of incident (include date, time, place)

Immediate intervention by Crisis Response Team

Follow-up procedures (with student, with student body (if appropriate), with faculty)

Follow-up with parent(s)/guardian(s) of student(s) involved:

Case Manager:_____

Reviewed by Principal: _____ Date: _____

Post-Incident Debriefing

Post-incident debriefing is a process that reviews the operations at the incident and how they may be improved. Benefits of post-incident debriefing include the following:

- A complete systematic account of the incident and an evaluation of the effectiveness of school procedures.
- Evaluation of response times.
- Evaluation of overall school, school-division, and community crisis management plans.
- Review of the effectiveness of practices and procedures.
- Review of adequacy of equipment and technology.
- Assessment of training needs.

The systematic process of debriefing should include review of the following:

- Initial understanding of crisis.
- Initial strategies and tactics.
- Results of strategies and tactics.
- Obstacles encountered.
- What worked well and why.
- Recommendations for improvement.

Postvention

Postvention is supportive activity for adults and youth following a crisis. Such activities include debriefing sessions for those involved in the crisis and educational and support groups. The following is important to consider or keep in mind:

Plan appropriate follow-up activities as needed for students and for faculties as well. Crises can trigger problems in children who have heretofore not been identified as at-risk. Offering ongoing support may avert further tragedy.

Group meetings for bereaved students have often evolved from initial sessions and may be necessary for some students to recover.

Some mental health centers have sent professionals to schools for designated periods of time to conduct sessions with students identified as having particular difficulty. Such sessions are voluntary and require parent permission.

School librarians have sometimes compiled a useful list of reading material for young children on the subject of death. The list has been helpful to teachers and to parents who wish to discuss the loss of someone in the school community.

Arrange crisis debriefing for those persons involved in the management of the crisis. These can take the form of one or two group sessions where both crisis management and personal stress are discussed. Community mental health personnel can assist in this activity.

The school needs to follow up specifically on faculty or school staff directly involved in the crisis — these might be custodians, cafeteria personnel, secretaries, bus drivers, teachers, counselors, or administrators. All need to be involved in a relatively intense "debriefing session" if they were directly involved.

"School administrators must take a long-term view of dealing with a crisis...symptoms associated with trauma may not appear for weeks or months after the incident."

-School Crisis Prevention and Response, National School Safety Center Resource Paper

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Follow-up to Crisis Situations

The following information may be useful in the days and weeks following a crisis. Longer term follow-up procedures are also listed.

The Day After: Workday Two of Crisis Management

1. Gather faculty members and update them on any additional information/procedures.

2. In case of death, provide funeral/visitation information if affected family has given permission.

3. Identify students in need of follow-up support and, in accordance with the school's crisis response plan, assign staff members to monitor vulnerable students:

   a. coordinate any ongoing counseling support for students on campus;
   b. announce ongoing support for students with place, time, and staff facilitator; and
   c. notify parents of affected students regarding community resources available to students and their families.

4. Convene crisis response team for debriefing as soon as possible:

   a. discuss successes and problems; and
   b. discuss things to do differently next time.

5. Allow staff opportunity to discuss feelings and reactions.

Long-Term Follow-up and Evaluation

1. Provide list of suggested readings to teachers, parents, and students.

2. Amend crisis response procedures as necessary.

3. Write thank-you notes to out-of-building district and community resource people who provided (or are still providing) support during the crisis.

4. Be alert on crisis anniversaries and holidays. Often students will experience "anniversary" grief reaction the following month or year on the date of the crisis, or when similar crises occur that remind them of the original crisis. Holidays, too, often are difficult for students who have experienced loss.

Related Reading

"Coping with the Ultimate Tragedy — The Death of a Student" by Lawrence Grant and Barry Schakner in NASSP Bulletin, April 1993.
"When Crisis Strikes: Strategies for Managing Student Grief" by Panny Munro and David Wellington in Schools in the Middle, Spring 1993.

Checklist

Checklist for Follow-Up

- ❒ Gather faculty for update.
- ❒ If acceptable to family, provide funeral information.
- ❒ Identify students requiring additional support and assign staff to monitor.
- ❒ Debrief with Crisis Response Team.
- ❒ Provide opportunity for staff to discuss feelings and reactions.
- ❒ As appropriate, provide a list of suggested readings to teachers, parents, and students.
- ❒ Amend crisis response procedures as necessary.
- ❒ Monitor crisis anniversaries.

Keep in Mind —

A regular day may be too hard for grieving students. Offer choices of activities.

Age-Specific Reactions to Loss

Age 6-10
Reactions observed primarily in play or artwork.

- Reduced attention span
- Radical changes in behavior
- Fantasizing event with savior at the end
- Mistrust of adults

Age 10-12 in girls, 12-14 in boys
Reactions reflected primarily in behavior which is less mature than characteristic behavior.

- Anger at unfairness
- Excitement of survival
- Attributes symbolic meaning to events (omens)
- Self-judgmental
- Psychosomatic illness

Age 13-18 in girls, 15-18 in boys
Reactions are similar to adult behaviors.

- Judgmental
- Mortality crisis
- Move to adult responsibilities to assume control
- Suspicious and guarded
- Difficulty eating and sleeping
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- More impulsive

Adolescent Reactions

SPECIAL ISSUES WITH ADOLESCENTS

- Allow regression and dependency
- Realize their lack of life experience in handling trauma
- Allow expression of feelings such as sorrow, hostility, and guilt
- Encourage discussion
- Allow for fluctuations in maturity level
- Watch for emergence of unfinished business or unresolved conflicts of the past
- Answer questions and provide factual information
- Correct distortions
- Avoid power struggle with adolescents
- Focus on strengths and constructive adaptive behaviors
- Identify and help resolve adolescents' sense of powerlessness

Factors That Increase the Likelihood of Trauma

According to the National Organization for Victim Assistance, certain factors increase the likelihood of trauma. Among these factors are the following:

- Incidents within closely knit communities
- Incidents with multiple eye witnesses
- When the victims have a special significance
- When a community is exposed to carnage or misery
- Incidents that call for numerous rescue workers
- Incidents that attract a great deal of media attention

Stages of Grief

Stages	Behavior	Feelings	Sensory	Images	Thinking	Relationships	Biological
Shock/ Avoidance (hours to a week)	•crying •increased activity •decreased activity	•overwhelmed •confused, dazed •disorganized •unreal •blunting (spaced out)	•feeling of being outside the body	•misperceiving the stimuli so to "see" the deceased •dreaming of the deceased	• "this could not have happened" • "why" • "what could I have done?" • poor concentration	•huddling into groups •passive to others •comforting others	•difficulty sleeping
Confronting the Reality (angry sadness)	•difficulty completing school work •difficulty paying attention in school •restless •taking on characteristics of the deceased	•sadness •anger •fear •anxiety (particularly in the morning) •guilt •frustrated •irritable •yearning for the deceased •gut wrenching emptiness •relief	•fatigue •chest pains •nausea •feeling the presence of the deceased •tension •grief attack (like hit by a wave)	•misperceiving the stimuli so to "see" the deceased •dreaming of the deceased	• preoccupation with the deceased • "what did I do or didn't do?" while person was alive • "why am I still alive?" • thoughts of harming self • "what else is going to happen?" • "am I going crazy?" • "will I always feel like this?"	•wanting to be with grievers •parents become impatient and scared	•difficulty sleeping •change in appetite
Reestablishment (loss is not forgotten, just put in a special place)	•gets back into school work •returns to normal activities	•initially some guilt about getting on with life •regular moods •occasional sadness	•normal body sensations •return to normal energy levels	•has positive image of deceased	• has positive thoughts of self • has positive or realistic thoughts about deceased	•reestablishing relationships with peers and parents •interest in new relationships	•normal eating and sleeping

Note: You do not go clearly or distinctly from one stage to another. Things become muddled between stages.

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When A Student Dies: Guidelines for a Classroom Discussion

1. Review the facts and dispel rumors.

2. Share your own reactions with the class and encourage students to express their reactions in a way appropriate for them, noting that people react in many ways and that is okay.
   Possible discussion question: What was it like for you when you first heard the news?

3. Inform students of locations for grief support; reassure students that any adult in the building is available for support.
   Possible discussion question: How can you students help each other through this?

4. Listen to what students have to say. It is important not to shut off discussion.

5. Talk with students about their concerns regarding "what to say" to other bereaved students and the family of the deceased. If applicable, share information about the deceased's culture (beliefs and ceremonies) which will help students understand and respond comfortably to the affected family.
   Possible discussion question: If you were a member of (the student's) family, what do you think you would want at a time like this?

6. If the student died of an illness and it is appropriate to do so, discuss the illness. This is especially useful for younger children who may need to differentiate between the illness of the child who died and any medical problems of others the child knows.

7. If a suicide occurs, discuss facts and myths about suicide.

8. Allow students to discuss other losses they have experienced. Help them understand this loss often brings up past losses; this is a normal occurrence.

9. Encourage students to discuss their feelings with their parents/families. Keep in mind a "regular" day may be too hard for grieving students. Offer choices of activities.

Possible Classroom Activities After a Loss

Supporting others

Discussing and preparing for funeral (what to expect, people's reactions, what to do, what to say)
Encouraging mutual support
Discussing ways to cope with traumatic situations
Discussing the stages of grief
Encouraging students to keep a journal of events and of their reactions, especially in an ongoing situation

Honoring the deceased*

Writing a eulogy
Writing stories about the victim
Placing a collection box in school for notes to the family
Designing a yearbook page commemorating the deceased
Composing and practicing a song in memory of the deceased
Supporting a cause the deceased supported.
Collecting and displaying memorabilia
Planting a tree, building a sculpture or painting a mural
Starting a new school activity such as a SADD unit if a child was killed by a drunk driver

**These activities are not recommended in the case of suicide; see Suicide Do's and Don'ts.*

Learning activities

Writing a reaction paper
Discussing historical precedents about issues related to crisis
Writing a "where I was when it happened" report
Investigating laws governing similar incidents
Conducting a mock trial if laws were broken
Debating controversial issues
Read books about loss (see list, Books for Students, Staff, and Parents in the Appendix)

Guidelines/Handouts for Students

HELPING A GRIEVING FRIEND

First Steps

- If you learn of a grieving friend outside of school hours, call and go over as quickly as you can, if possible; or at least call.
- If you learn of a grieving friend during school, try to see the friend or send a note until you are able to talk.
- Your presence is all that is needed; if you wish to take a flower or anything meaningful, that's all right, too.
- Offer physical comfort.
- Don't be afraid to cry with your friend.
- Do not try to take away the pain from your grieving friend.

Communication

- Talk about the deceased person (grieving people really like telling stories about the deceased, "Do you remember the time. . .").
- No cliche statements (e.g., "He's better off now since he now has no pain").
- Don't be afraid you will upset your friend by asking or talking about the deceased; they are already very upset and should be.
- Just sitting with your friend may be all that's needed at times; don't be afraid of silence, the griever will most likely fill it talking about the deceased.
- Offer suggestions only when advice is asked.
- Listen, no matter what the topic.
- Do not tell the griever to feel better since there are other loved ones still alive.
- Call to check on.

Attending a Visitation at the Funeral Home or Attending a Funeral

- If you have not ever been to a funeral home or a funeral, expect to feel nervous.
- Go with a friend or ask a parent to accompany you, if you wish.
- If this is the first time you've seen the grieving friend, simply offer your condolences; just saying, "I am so sorry about _____'s death" probably will open a conversation, or simply point out something special to you about the deceased.
- If the visitation or funeral is open casket, view the physical remains if you want; you do not have to.

Later Involvement

- Ask your grieving friend to go places, do activities together (it's all right if he/she initially resists).
- If invitations are turned down, keep inviting.
- Call to check on and talk to.
- Continue to talk about the deceased from time to time.

— Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools

WHEN A GRIEVING CLASSMATE RETURNS

First Words

- The classmate probably feels like he/she is from a different planet when returning to school.
- There is very little you can say wrong, so talk to the classmate.
- At least say, "hello," "welcome back," "I'm glad to see you," or something similar.
- The brave might even say: "I missed you," "I'm so sorry to hear about your _____'s death."
- Even braver friends might even make statements like "It must be incredibly tough to have your_____die."
- Another option: write a brief note.
- If your classmate cries, that is okay; you did not cause the grief and you can't make the person feel worse. Offer comfort and a tissue.

Helping the Classmate Adjust to the Class

- Offer to provide past notes.
- Offer to provide notes for comparison for the next week or so (your classmate's attention span will probably vary for several weeks).
- Give the classmate your phone number to call if having problems with homework.
- Ask your classmate if you can call to check on how homework is going.
- Ask the teacher if you can be the student's helper for a week.
- Offer to study together in person or over the phone; this might help with both motivation (grieving students frequently do not feel like doing school work) and with concentration.

Some Don'ts

- Don't shun. Speak to the student.
- No cliche statements (e.g., "I know how you feel" when nobody knows the unique relationship the classmate had with the deceased).
- Don't expect the person to snap back into the "old self".
- Don't be surprised if classmate seems unaffected by the loss, everybody has his/her own way of grieving.
- Don't be afraid to ask appropriate questions about the deceased, like "what did you and your_____enjoy together?" (people never tire of talking about the people they grieve).
- Just because the classmate may seem to be adjusting to school again, don't assume the grieving has stopped, nor the need for comfort and friendship.

— Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools

HELPING GRIEVING PARENTS

This information should be helpful when interacting with the parents of a deceased friend. Always respect the wishes of grieving parents. These suggestions must fit the parents' needs and requests.

First Steps

- In the vast majority of cases the parents very much want to see the friends of their deceased child; they find it comforting.
- If you were a close friend of the deceased and you know the parents, then go visit them at their home.
- If you were a friend but had not met the parents (yet they know who you are), you might still visit the home.
- Other friends might wait until the visitation, such as held at a funeral home, or wait until the funeral.
- Regardless of the depth of your relationship with the parents, let them hear from you either by a call or a note.

Communication

- When you visit, do not worry about what to say; your presence is all that is needed. If you wish to take a flower or anything meaningful, that's all right, too.
- Don't be afraid you will upset the parents by asking or talking about the deceased; they are already upset.
- Don't be afraid to cry with the parents.
- Just sitting with the parents may be all that's needed at times; don't be afraid of silence, the parents will most likely fill the silence talking about their deceased child.
- Offer physical comfort.
- Listen, no matter what the topic.
- If you were a really close friend, the parents might be pleased for you to even visit the deceased friend's room.
- Ask what you can do for them; ask other relatives what you might do to help.
- Do not try to take away the pain from the grieving parents.
- No cliche statements (e.g., "he's better off now since he now has no pain").
- Talk about the deceased person (grieving people really like telling stories about the deceased, "do you remember the time. . .").
- Offer suggestions only when advice is asked.
- Do not tell the parents to feel better since there are other children and loved ones still alive.

Attending a Visitation at a Funeral Home or Attending a Funeral

- Expect to feel nervous when going to a funeral home or a funeral.
- Go with a friend or ask a parent to accompany you.
- If this is the first time you've seen the parents, simply offer your condolences; just say, "I am so sorry about _____'s death" probably will open a conversation; or maybe better, simply point out something special to you about the deceased.
- If the visitation or funeral is open casket, view the physical remains if you want; you do not have to.

Later Involvement

- After the funeral, continue to visit the parents; they probably will continue to want to see the friends of their deceased child.
- Call to check on and talk to.
- Continue to talk about their deceased child from time to time.

— Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools

WHEN YOUR TEACHER HAS SOMEONE DIE

Feelings

- Expect you and your classmates to experience different feelings, ranging from shock, sadness, vulnerability ("this could happen to me or someone I know"), to detach or nothing. All are okay.
- Some in your class may even laugh because they are nervous hearing or talking about grief and death. This may be their way of handling it, so don't become angry.
- Don't be surprised to catch yourself asking how this might affect you, your grades, or your relationship with your teacher.
- It's okay to think about other people who have died.

What To Do

- Talk with somebody (a friend or parent) about what has happened. This helps make the situation seem more real and keeps you from holding everything in.
- Try to get the courage to communicate with your teacher.

Communicating with Your Grieving Teacher

- Your teacher probably has a lot to do and cannot take calls from students.
- Send a card (buy or make).
- Write a note (and you don't have to have fancy stationery).
- You probably will feel weird trying to write to somebody who is grieving.
- Just write "I'm sorry" or "I'm thinking about you" or "I hope you are okay."
- Others may write more, even share their own experiences with grief. One student even composed a poem!
- There is nothing you can say that could make your grieving teacher feel worse.
- You are not going to remind a grieving person that he/she has had somebody die.
- Your teacher may never throw your card/note away, that's how important your communication will be. Your parents probably still have notes they've received.

Flowers and Donations

- They are not necessary.
- If you really want to do something, maybe you and some friends could pitch in together. Or maybe the class wants to do something as group. It just takes one person to organize this.

What If You See Your Teacher Out in the Community

- If you see your teacher at the grocery store, a part of you will want to hide. How will that make your teacher feel?
- Speak to your teacher! You don't have to say much. "How are you doing?" or "We miss you at school" is enough.

What About Funerals and Memorial Services

- You have to respect the wishes of grieving people.
- Some teachers may welcome students. Others may not feel ready to cope with you yet. Some may feel uncomfortable with you around and their being "out of control." We have to understand and respect their needs.
- Also, 120 students take up a lot of space.
- Sometimes there is no chance to talk with the family. Other times you can't leave the building without doing so.
- If given the opportunity, speak. Again, just say "I'm sorry" or something brief. Have your first several words chosen to lessen your fear.

Visitation at a Funeral Home

- If students are invited, go but take someone with you.
- Unless you have lots of experiences with visitation, you are going to feel scared and weird.
- If you go, speak simply as described above.

—Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools

WHEN YOUR GRIEVING TEACHER RETURNS

Getting Ready

- Plan some type of simple welcome back signal from the class to your grieving teacher. Consider:
  - — a card signed by all the class;
  - — a small banner from "second period"; or
  - — some flowers from a parent's yard, if in season; or a small, inexpensive bouquet.
- If you have not communicated with your teacher, it's not too late to have a note ready just from you. It could be waiting in the teacher's mailbox on his/her return to school.
- Realize that the same teacher who left will return. Your teacher may initially seem a little distant or preoccupied but this should not last too long.
- Your teacher may have very poor concentration for awhile after returning to work. He/she might repeat things. You may have to repeat your questions.
- Do not expect tests and homework to be returned as quickly as before; poor concentration, low motivation, and fatigue are typical grief reactions.

On the Big Day

- Expect to feel nervous. Your teacher will feel the same way.
- Your teacher also will probably feel like he/she is from a different planet.
- A part will say to sneak into the classroom without being seen. You might even justify these feelings by not wanting to upset your teacher. How would your teacher feel if no one spoke? How would you feel if you had been away from school for awhile and no one spoke to you when you returned?
- When you first see your teacher, at least say something simple, like, "Welcome back."
- The class also could even let a very brave volunteer speak for the class to formally welcome your teacher back. Or the volunteer could present the card.
- Show your good behavior; use your best listening skills. Help your teacher out; it will be a tough day. Smile!
- Some teachers will return quickly to teaching; others will discuss their grief. There is no single right way.

What If Your Teacher Cries?

- You do not have to do anything but be patient.
- Your class could have a brave volunteer designated to offer comfort by saying something simple, such as, "We're supporting you."
- The student closest to the tissue box should take the box to the teacher. This shows the class cares and says it's okay to cry.
- At the end of class students might individually offer brief words of comfort or encouragement ("it's okay to get upset" or "I'm glad you are back").
- Your teacher may be embarrassed by crying, but crying can be very helpful.
- If your teacher is having a really bad day, let your guidance counselor or other staff member know.

— Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools

Caring for the Caretakers

Debriefing

The demands of responding to a crisis are intense and place the caretakers, regardless of training or previous experience, under a great deal of stress. It is strongly recommended that crisis team members who have been involved in a crisis have the opportunity for "debriefing," preferably with a trained crisis team from another school. For team members, the debriefing is an opportunity to express feelings and receive emotional support; for the other team, the debriefing is an opportunity to learn and to become better prepared for crises.

Symptoms of Reaction to Crisis or Disaster in Adults

First Reactions:

1. Numbness, shock, difficulty believing what has occurred or is in the process of occurring. Physical and mental reactions may be very slow or confused.
2. Difficulty in decision making. Uncertainty about things; it may be difficult to choose a course of action or to make even small judgement calls.

Ongoing Reactions:

1. Loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, loss of interest or pleasure in everyday activities.
2. Desire to get away from everyone — even family and friends.
3. Emotional liability; becoming irritable or upset more quickly than usual.
4. Feelings of fatigue, hopelessness, helplessness.
5. Digestive problems; headaches or backaches.
6. Difficulty accepting that the crisis has had an impact or accepting support from friends and the community.

Some Things That Can Be Helpful

1. Take time to relax and do things you find pleasant. Getting away for a few hours with close friends can be helpful.
2. Stick with your regular routine for a while; avoid making changes, even if it appears to be a positive change.
3. Get regular exercise or participate in a regular sport; activity soothes anxiety and helps you relax.
4. Keep your days as simple as possible; avoid taking on any additional responsibilities or new projects.
5. Tap sources of assistance with your workload — have students, instructional assistants, or volunteers help grade papers, take care of copying, or help with other time-consuming tasks.
6. If symptoms of stress persist beyond a few weeks or are severe, seek professional help.

Post-Traumatic Stress Reactions

(Source: Chesapeake Public Schools)

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional
Nausea	Slowed thinking	Anxiety
Upset stomach	Difficulty making decisions	Fear
Tremors *(lips, hands)*	Difficulty in problem-solving	Guilt
Feeling uncoordinated	Confusion	Grief
Profuse sweating	Disorientation *(especially to place and time)*	Depression
Chills	Difficulty calculating	Sadness
Diarrhea	Difficulty concentrating	Feeling hurt
Chest pain *(should be checked at hospital)*	Difficulty naming common objects	Feeling abandoned
Rapid heartbeat	Seeing the event over and over	Worry about others
Rapid breathing	Distressing dreams	Wanting to hide
Increased blood pressure	Poor attention span	Wanting to limit contact with others
Headaches		Anger
Muscle aches		Irritability
Sleep disturbance		Feeling numb
		Startled
		Shocked

Post-Traumatic Loss Debriefing: Providing Immediate Support for Survivors of Suicide or Sudden Loss

(Source: Chesapeake Public Schools)

Overview

Children's suicidal behavior is escalating as America's number one mental health concern. Suicide intervention and prevention within the context of the school-as-community does not end with a student's death. School counselors, administrators and mental health professionals need to develop systematic strategies to intervene with survivors, as well as potentially at-risk students.

The sudden, unexpected death by suicide or the sudden loss from an accidental death often produces a characteristic set of psychological and physiological responses among survivors. Persons exposed to traumatic events such as suicide or sudden loss often manifest the following stress reactions: irritability, sleep disturbance, anxiety, startle reaction, nausea, headache, difficulty concentrating, confusion, fear, guilt, withdrawal, anger, and reactive depression. The particular pattern of the emotional reaction and type of response will differ with each survivor depending on the relationship of the deceased, circumstances surrounding the death, and coping mechanisms of the survivors. The ultimate contribution of suicide or sudden loss intervention with survivor groups is to create an appropriate and meaningful opportunity to respond to suicide or sudden death.

Providing Structure During Chaos

Post-traumatic loss debriefing is a structured group process approach to help survivors manage their physical, cognitive and emotional responses to a traumatic loss. It creates a supportive environment to process blocked communication which often interferes with the expression of grief or feelings of guilt. It also serves to correct distorted attitudes toward the deceased, as well as discuss ways of coping with the loss. The purpose of the debriefing is to reduce the trauma associated with the sudden loss, insure an adaptive grief process and prevent further self-destructive or self-defeating behavior.

Post-traumatic loss debriefing is composed of seven stages: introductory stage, fact stage, life-review stage, feeling stage, reaction stage, learning stage, and closure. A debriefing should be organized 24 to 72 hours after the death. Natural feelings of denial and avoidance predominate during the first 24 hours. The debriefing can be offered to all persons affected by the loss, however, it is probably most effective with the immediate survivor group.

The sudden, unexpected death by suicide or the sudden loss from an accidental death often produces a characteristic set of psychological and physiological responses among survivors.

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Stages of Post-Traumatic Loss Debriefing

I. Introductory Stage: Introduce survivors to the debriefing process.

- The counselor defines the nature, limits, roles and goals within the debriefing process.

- The counselor clarifies time limits, number of sessions, and confidentiality and strives to create a secure environment in which to share anxieties.

II. Fact Stage: Information is gathered to "recreate the event" from what is known about it. During the fact phase, participants are asked to recreate the event for the counselor. The focus of this stage is on facts, not feelings:

- Group members are asked to make a brief statement regarding their relationship with the deceased, how they heard about the death, and circumstances surrounding the event. It is important that the group share the same story concerning the death and that secrets or rumors not be permitted to divide members from each other. Group processing of the death also provides the counselor with an opportunity to listen to any attributions of guilt, extreme emotional responses, or post-traumatic stress reactions.

- Survivors are encouraged to engage in a moderate level of self-disclosure, with counselor facilitated statements such as, "I didn't know . . . could you tell me what that was like for you?"

It is important for the counselor to: (1) try to achieve an accurate sense of the survivors' world; (2) be aware of the survivors' choice of topics regarding the death; (3) gain insight into their priorities for the moment and (4) help survivors see the many factors which contributed to the death and to curtail self-blame.

The low initial interaction is a non-threatening warm-up and naturally leads into a discussion of feelings in the next stage. It also provides a climate in which to share the details of the death and to intervene to prevent secrets or rumors that may divide survivors.

III. Life Review Stage: A life review of the deceased can be the next focus, if appropriate. Zinner (1987) maintains that a life review provides an opportunity for the group members to recount personal anecdotes about the deceased. The opportunity to share "remember when. . ." stories lessens tension and anxiety within the survivor group. This also serves to ease the acceptance of the helping professional by the group.

The opportunity to share "remember when. . ." stories lessens tension and anxiety within the survivor group.

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IV. Feeling Stage: Feelings are identified and integrated into the process. At this stage, survivors should have the opportunity to share the burden of the feelings they are experiencing in a non-judgmental, supportive and understanding manner. Survivors must be permitted to identify their own behavioral reactions and to relate to the immediate present, i.e., the "here and now."

- The counselor begins by asking feeling-oriented questions: "How did you feel when that happened?" and "How are you feeling now?" This is a critical component where survivors acknowledge that "things do get better" with time.

- Each person in the group is offered an opportunity to answer these and a variety of other questions regarding their feelings. It is important that survivors express thoughts of responsibility regarding the event and process the accompanying feelings of sadness.

- At this stage, as in others, it is critical that no one gets left out of the discussion, and that no one dominates the discussion at the expense of others. All feelings, positive or negative, big or small, are important and need to be listened to and expressed. More importantly, however, this particular stage allows survivors to see that subtle changes are occurring between what happened then and what is happening now.

V. Reaction Stage: This stage explores the physical and cognitive stress reactions to the traumatic event. Acute reactions can last from a few days to a few weeks. Selected post-traumatic stress reactions may include nausea, distressing dreams, difficulty concentrating, depression, feeling isolated, grief, anxiety and fear of losing control.

- The counselor asks such questions as, "What reactions did you experience at the time of the incident?" and "What are you experiencing now?" The counselor encourages survivors to discuss what is going on in their school and/or work lives and in their relationships with parents, peers and teachers.

VI. Learning Stage: This stage is designed to assist survivors in learning new coping skills to deal with the grief reactions. It is also therapeutic to help survivors realize that others are having similar feelings and experiences.

- The counselor assumes the responsibility of teaching the group something about their typical, stress response reactions.

- The emphasis is on describing how typical and natural it is for people to experience a wide variety of feelings, emotions and physical reactions to any traumatic event. Adolescents, in particular, need to know that their reactions are not unique, but are universally shared reactions.
- Critical to this stage is being alert to danger signals in order to prevent destructive outcomes and to help survivors return to their pre-crisis equilibrium and interpersonal stability.

This stage also serves as a primary prevention component for future self-defeating or self-destructive behavior by identifying the normal responses to a traumatic event in a secure, therapeutic environment with a caring, trusted adult.

VII. Closure Stage: This final stage seeks to wrap up loose ends, answer outstanding questions, provide final assurances, and create a plan of action that is life-centered. Survivor groups often need a direction or specific shared activity after a debriefing to bring closure to the process. Discussion surrounding memorials are often suggested and need appropriate direction.

- Survivors should be aware that closure is taking place, therefore, no new issues should be introduced or discussed at this stage of the debriefing process.

- The counselor should: 1) examine whether initial stress symptoms have been reduced or eliminated; (2) assess the coping abilities of the survivors; and (3) determine if increased levels of relating to others and the environment have occurred, i.d., "Are the survivors genuinely hopeful regarding their immediate future? Are the survivors managing their lives more effectively?"

- The group may also close by planning a group activity together such as a "living task," for example, going to a movie, concert, or similar activity to promote a sense of purpose and unity.

Ultimately, school counselors are in a unique position to guide intervention and postvention efforts when a suicide or sudden loss occurs. This debriefing procedure provides the critical component for restoring school/community equilibrium.

Acute reactions can last from a few days to a few weeks.

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Post-Traumatic Loss Debriefing

Introductory Stage
- roles and goals
- clarification of time limits, confidentiality, etc.

Fact Phase
- recreate the event
- fact focused
- share the same story
- group facilitator should listen for
  - — any attribution of guilt
  - — extreme emotional responses
  - — post-traumatic stress reactions
  - — choice of topics regarding the death
  - — an accurate sense of the survivor's world

Life Review Stage
- survivors recount personal anecdotes
- survivors share "remember when . . ." stories

Feeling Stage
- survivors share the burden of the feelings they are experiencing
- survivors identify their own behavioral reactions
- group facilitator:
  - — asks feeling-oriented questions... "How did you feel then, how are you feeling now?"
  - — survivors express thoughts of responsibility regarding the event

Reaction Stage
- explore the physical, emotional, and cognitive stress reactions

Learning Stage
- assist survivors in learning new coping skills
- teach the group typical stress response reactions
- be alert to danger signals

Closure

This debriefing procedure provides the critical component for restoring school/community equilibrium.

Suicide

A special word about . . .

Suicide

A school's general response to a suicide does not differ markedly from a response to any sudden death crisis, and the Procedures for General Crisis Intervention can appropriately be implemented. However, some issues exclusive to suicide require specific attention.

School administrators must allow students to grieve the loss of a peer without glorifying the method of death. Over emphasis of a suicide may be interpreted by vulnerable students as a glamorization of the suicidal act, which can assign legendary or idolized status to taking one's own life.

The following "DOs" and "DON'Ts" will help school staff limit glamorization of suicide:

- Do acknowledge the suicide as a tragic loss of life.
- Do allow students to attend funeral services.
- Do provide support for students profoundly affected by the death.
- Do *not* organize school assemblies to honor the deceased student.
- Do *not* dedicate the yearbook or yearbook pages, newspaper articles, proms, athletic events, or advertisements to the deceased individual.
- Do *not* pay tribute to a suicidal act by planting trees, hanging engraved plaques, or holding other memorial activities.

A suicide in the school community can heightened the likelihood, in the subsequent weeks, of "copycat" suicide attempts and threats among those especially vulnerable to the effects of a suicide. To prevent further tragedies, students considered to be especially susceptible to depression/suicide must be carefully monitored and appropriate action taken if they are identified as high risk. These efforts require a limited, rather than schoolwide, response.

Suicidal Risk

Students at risk for suicide are increasingly common. Because suicide rarely happens without some warning to *someone,* staff and faculty need to take all comments about suicidal thoughts seriously, especially if details of a suicide plan are shared.

When a student is considered to be at risk for suicide, a parent or guardian must be contacted and involved from the onset. Any time the risk of suicide exists, the situation must be managed by an appropriately trained Crisis Response Team member or other trained district professional, such as a school psychologist, counselor, or social worker. **Under no circumstances should an untrained person attempt to assess the severity of suicidal risk**; all assessment of threats, attempts, or other risk factors must be left to the appropriate professionals.

In cases of suicidal risk, the school should maintain a confidential record of actions taken. This will help assure that appropriate assessment, monitoring, and support are provided to the designated student and, should she or he commit a suicide later, such records will document the school's efforts to intervene and protect the student. For districts lacking appropriate risk assessment instruments, sample forms are usually available from reputable community resources. A monitoring form can be based on something as simple as the checklist on the following page. Again, such forms do not stand alone. Any assessment of suicidal risk be undertaken by a qualified professional.

Document your monitoring of a student at risk for suicide by checking off the following appropriate actions taken.

For every high school of 2000 or more students in the United States, there will be at least one successful suicide and thirty to fifty attempts each year.

—National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) 1995

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Checklist

Suicidal Risk Checklist

- ❒ School administrator notified.
- ❒ Parent/guardian notified or emergency contact notified.
- ❒ Mental health service provider (on site or external) notified and severity assessment requested.
- ❒ Other actions taken (specify):

Do's and Don'ts Related to Suicidal Threats

DO LISTEN to what the student is saying and take her/his suicidal threat seriously. Many times a student may be looking for just that assurance.

DO OBSERVE the student's nonverbal behavior. In children and adolescents, facial expressions, body language, and other concrete signs often are more telling than what the student says.

DO ASK whether the student is really thinking about suicide. If the answer is "yes," ask how she/he plans to do it and what steps have already been taken. This will convince the student of your attention and let you know how serious the threat is.

DO GET HELP by contacting an appropriate crisis response team member. Never attempt to handle a potential suicide by yourself.

DO STAY with the student. Take the student to a crisis response team member and stay with that student for awhile. The student has placed trust in you, so you must help transfer that trust to the other person.

DON'T leave the student alone for even a minute.

DON'T act shocked or allow yourself to be sworn to secrecy.

DON'T underestimate or brush aside a threat ("You won't really do it; you're not the type"), or try to shock or challenge the student ("Go ahead. Do it."). The student may already feel rejected and unnoticed, and you should not add to that burden.

DON'T let the student convince you that the crisis is over. The most dangerous time is precisely when the person seems to be feeling better. Sometimes, after a suicide method has been selected, the student may appear happy and relaxed. You should, therefore, stay involved until you get help.

DON'T take too much upon yourself. Your responsibility to the student in a crisis is limited to listening, being supportive, and getting her/him to a trained professional. Under no circumstances should you attempt to counsel the student.

— Source: Association of California School Administrators

Suicide Threats

Crisis Intervention Procedures For Potentially Suicidal Students

Referral

Go to a Member of the Crisis Team

Students at risk can self-refer or be referred to the crisis team by school staff, parent, friend, neighbor, or other person from the community. Students at risk range from those talking of hopelessness, to those writing poems with suicidal intent, to students telling someone of planning to harm themselves. Team members might include principals, psychologists, counselors, teachers, social workers, and nurses. The team member receiving the referral should gather pertinent information from the referral source before contacting other team members.

Team Consultation

Designate Case Manager, Gather Information

When possible, the available team members gather to designate a case manager, considering the following factors: 1) existing relationship with the student, 2) time and coverage constraints, 3) seriousness of the problem, 4) experience of the members. The team or case manager reviews the student's records and gathers information from staff who know the student.

Crisis Interview

Conduct Interview

The case manager interviews the student on the day of the referral. The case manager determines the extent of suicidal thinking, the potential plan of suicide, the lethality of the plan, and the history of the student's suicidal thinking and attempts. For severe cases, insure the safety of the student through adult supervision.

Team Review

Team Members Decide Plan

The case manager returns as soon as possible to the available team members to discuss the case and formulate a plan of action. Depending on the seriousness of the case, the team may wish to consult with other members not initially involved or discuss case with County Mental Health. Plans formulated by the team might range from no further involvement, to monitoring by a specific staff member, to referral for counseling within the school setting, to asking the parents to take immediate action with their child.

Outside Contacts

Parents Notified

Parents of all interviewed students will be contacted by the case manager on the same day of referral and interview. Parents will be told of the reason for referral, the outcome of the interview, and the plans formulated by the team. When the suicide potential is significant, the case manager needs to ascertain that the parents accept responsibility to follow through with the team's recommendations. If the student is dangerous to self and the parents cannot be located, then the case manager contacts the Crisis Intervention Unit of the Mental Health Department. In extremely dangerous situations, the police may be called first to ensure the safety of the student. Follow-up remains the responsibility of the case manager unless explicitly agreed to by other staff members. The case manager documents the case and shares information with other team members.

Myths and Facts About Suicide

Myth: People who talk about suicide don't commit suicide.
Fact: Most people who commit suicide have given clues of some type to one or more people. It is not safe to assume that someone talking about suicide will not attempt it; the majority of those who attempt suicide have stated their intent to someone.

Myth: Suicide happens without warning.
Fact: While explicit verbal warnings are not always given, there are clues ahead of time. The difficulty is that not everyone recognizes the signs and symptoms that would alert him/her to the possibility of suicide.

Myth: Suicidal people are fully intent on dying.
Fact: Rather than specifically wanting to die, students who attempt/commit suicide often do so simply because they have exhausted their coping skills and see no other options for relief from pain.

Myth: Once suicidal, a person is suicidal forever.
Fact: Preoccupation with suicidal thoughts is usually time-limited. Most young people who work through a suicidal crisis can go on to lead healthy lives.

Myth: Once a person attempts suicide, the humiliation and pain will prevent future attempts.
Fact: Eighty percent of persons who commit suicide have made at least one prior attempt (Hafen & Frandsen, 1986). It is critical that concerned adults and peers monitor a student who has attempted suicide for several months following the attempt. Those students who receive help for their suicidal risk before they made an attempt have a better prognosis than those who were intervened upon following an attempted suicide.

Myth: Suicide occurs more often among the wealthy.
Fact: Suicide knows no socioeconomic boundaries.

Myth: Suicidal behavior is inherited.
Fact: As with other patterns of behavior, suicide sometimes seems to run in families. However, suicide is not a genetic trait, so it is not inherited. What can appear to be a family trait of suicide may be because family members share a common emotional environment and often adopt similar methods of coping. In a family where someone has committed suicide, suicide may be viewed as acceptable in times of distress.

Myth: People who attempt or commit suicide are mentally ill or psychotic.
Fact: Many suicidal persons historically have had difficulty in working through problems. Other people who attempt or commit suicide choose it as an option when their previously successful means of coping are not effective, and they are unable to otherwise stop the pain they are experiencing. A history of mental illness does not increase the risk of suicide.

Myth: Talking about suicide can encourage a person to attempt it.
Fact: On the contrary, initiating a discussion of suicidal feelings may give a suicidal adolescent permission to talk about the pain he/she is experiencing and, by so doing, provide significant relief. It is highly unlikely that discussing suicide would influence a nonsuicidal person to become preoccupied with the idea.

Myth: People who attempt suicide just want attention.
Fact: Suicide should be considered a "cry for help." Persons overwhelmed by pain may be unable to let others know they need help, and suicide may seem the bet way to relieve the pain. Suicidal behavior may be a desperate move to reach out for much needed help.

Myth: Suicide is most likely to occur at night as well as over the holiday season.
Fact: Suicides can occur at any time, regardless of season, time of day or night, weather or holidays. Childhood and adolescent suicides, however, are most likely to occur in the spring, and second most likely to occur in the fall. Most childhood and adolescent suicides occur at home on weekends or between the hours of 3 p.m. and midnight (Eyeman, 1987; Indiana State Board of Health, 1985).

Myth: When depression lifts, there is no longer danger of suicide.
Fact: This is a dangerous misconception. The lifting of depression often accompanies the development of a suicide plan and the final decision to commit suicide. If the improvement in mood is sudden and circumstances have not changed, the risk of suicide remains high.

– Source: Association of California School Administrators, 1995

Suicide Clusters

The Centers for Disease Control define a suicide cluster as a group of suicides or suicide attempts, or both, that occur closer together in time and space than would normally be expected in a given community. Although many think that clusters occur through a process of "contagion" — in which suicides occur later in the cluster were influenced by the earlier suicides — this theory has not been formally tested.

Some groups of suicides may occur at approximately the same time simply by chance. However, even these pseudo-clusters can create a crisis atmosphere in the communities in which they occur and cause intense concern on the part of parents, students, school officials and others. (See "Perceived Crisis" in the Quick Guide to Crises).

" I think it is a mistake for a school to close the day following a suicide. In this way the students are left to their own devices at the precise time when they are most upset and overwhelmed by their feelings, and the opportunity for a rumor mill to greatly distort the actual events is inadvertently encouraged."

— Dr. David C. Clark, Executive Director
Center for Suicide Research and Prevention

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Suicide Attempts

When a school becomes aware that a student or staff member has attempted suicide, the school must protect that person's right to privacy. Should a parent or other family member notify the school of a student's suicide attempt, the family should be referred to appropriate community agencies for support services. Staff response should be focused on quelling the spread of rumors and minimizing the fears of fellow students and staff. As opposed to convening a Crisis Response Team meeting and alerting the student body, any services provided to the person who attempted suicide must be kept confidential and coordinated with outside service providers, such as a suicide crisis counselor or hospital emergency team.

A SUICIDE ATTEMPT BECOMES A CRISIS TO BE MANAGED BY SCHOOL STAFF ONLY WHEN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS EXIST:

1. Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging.

2. Students witness law enforcement action or emergency services response.

3. A group of the survivor's friends are profoundly affected by the suicide attempt and request support.

When one or more of the above conditions exists, the following should be implemented:

1. Tell the person providing the information about the suicide attempt not to repeat it elsewhere in the school.

2. If school office staff members heard the report, tell them not to repeat or give out any information within or outside school unless they are specifically told to do so.

3. Have the Crisis Response Team member closest to the survivor talk to the most profoundly affected friends and determine the type support they need.

4. Provide space in the school for the identified peers to receive support services. Provide necessary passes to release these students from class to receive services.

Checklist

Monitor any school intervention in a suicide attempt with the following checklist.

Suicide Attempt Checklist

- ❒ School involvement regarding the incident is due to:
  - ❒ Rumors and myths that are widespread and damaging;
  - ❒ Law enforcement action/emergency services witnessed by students; and
  - ❒ Survivor's friends requesting intervention.
- ❒ Information providers/recipients enjoined not to repeat information elsewhere.
- ❒ Steps taken to protect the survivor's right to privacy.
- ❒ Action taken to quell rumors.
- ❒ Crisis Response Team member closest to the survivor met with friends to determine support needed.
- ❒ Space provided on site for identified peers to receive support services.
- ❒ School reentry procedures followed.
- ❒ All records related to the incident and services provided stored in confidential file.

School Reentry for a Student Who Has Attempted Suicide

Efforts to respond to suicide attempts and other traumas should be focused on making the student's return to school a comfortable one. Because families exposed to a suicide attempt experience considerable guilt and fear, they are more likely to disclose that a daughter or son has made an attempt if they know the school has a helpful, nonthreatening manner of dealing with suicide.

Because a student who attempted suicide often is at greater risk for a suicide in the months following the crisis, it is extremely important to closely monitor his or her reentry into school and to maintain close contact with parents and mental health professionals working with that student.

Assuming the student will be absent from one to four weeks after a suicide attempt and possibly hospitalized in a treatment facility, your school should follow these steps:

1. Obtain a written release of information form signed by the parents. This makes it possible for confidential information to be shared between school personnel and treatment providers.

2. Inform the student's teachers regarding the number of probable days of absence.

3. Instruct teachers to provide the students with assignments to be completed, if appropriate.

4. Maintain contact with the student to keep him/her informed of the latest developments in the school, if appropriate.

5. Seek recommendations for aftercare from the student's therapist. If the student has been hospitalized, a Crisis Response Team member should attend the discharge meeting at the hospital.

6. The Crisis Response Team member should convey relevant nonconfidential information to appropriate school staff regarding the aftercare plan.

7. Once the student returns to school, a Crisis Response Team member should maintain regular contact with him/her.

8. The school should maintain contact with the parents, provide progress reports and other appropriate information, and be kept informed of any changes in the aftercare plan.

Communications

School Communication •
ication With Parents & Community •
Media Communication •

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Communications

Communication is a critical part of crisis management. School staff members and students must be told what is happening and what to do. Parents of students and families of staff members must be informed about the situation, including the status of their child or family member. Timely contact with law enforcement and other emergency services is necessary for effective response. School Board members must be kept informed and updated information must be transmitted to central office and to other affected schools. The press must be informed and kept updated. Additionally, groups which are a part of the school community (PTA, advisory councils, etc.) and can assist with getting accurate information into the community are important. This chapter focuses on communication — within the school and school division, with parents and the community, and with the media.

When a Crisis Has Occurred

Notifying faculty and staff of an event or crisis and keeping them informed as additional information becomes available and as plans for management of the situation evolve is critical. Some practices which school administrators have found to be helpful include the following:

The Telephone Tree
A telephone tree is a simple, widely used system for notifying staff of a crisis event when they are not at school. A very carefully crafted statement, specifying what is and is not yet known, should be drafted before the telephone tree is activated.

The Morning Faculty Meeting
An early, brief faculty meeting provides the opportunity to give accurate, updated information about the crisis event/situation itself and to review with staff procedures for the day, including the availability of intervention resources.

The End-of-Day One Faculty Meeting
A brief end-of-day one meeting provides the opportunity to review day one, update information, and plan for day two. Misinformation or rumors can be addressed before staff members go home or into the community where they are likely to be asked about the situation.

School Communication

Dealing with Rumors

Establishing reliable communications networks is critical for dealing effectively with a potentially detrimental phenomenon always present in crises: rumors. People are going to talk about an emergency and, when accurate information is not available, rumors begin. Without facts, people begin to speculate and the speculations soon come to be thought of as "facts." Left unchecked, rumors can become more difficult to deal with than the crisis event. They may create a negative perception of the school's ability to manage an emergency or, even worse, a belief that the school cannot provide for the safety and well-being of the children. The most effective strategy for combating rumors is to provide facts as soon as possible. Some strategies which may be helpful include the following:

1. Identify and notify internal groups including administrators, teachers, students, custodians, secretaries, teaching assistants, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers. These people are primary sources of information and are likely to be contacted in their neighborhoods, at grocery stores, etc. It is critical that they have accurate information because what they know (or don't know and are speculating about) will be passed on. A faculty/staff meeting should be held before staff members are allowed to go home so that what is (and is not) known can be clearly communicated.

2. Clerical staff who answer the telephone at the school and at the central office must know which information can be shared and which information cannot be shared. They must be kept informed of inaccurate information which is circulating so they can help "correct" misinformation. Designating a few persons to answer calls helps control the circulating of misinformation.

3. Use of key communicators in the community will also combat rumors. A telephone tree or a briefing held especially for identified community representatives directly associated with the school will help spread accurate information.

4. The media can also help control rumors; ask them to provide frequent updates to the public, particularly providing accurate information where rumors need to be dispelled.

5. After the immediate crisis has passed, public meetings may be helpful. It provides an opportunity for people to ask questions and to receive accurate information. A follow-up public meeting may also be helpful in restoring the community's confidence in the school's ability to manage crises and to provide a safe environment.

People are going to talk about an emergency and, when accurate information is not available, rumors begin.

Using Technology for Communication

Technology can be a very effective tool for communication during a crisis. Some common tools that may be used include the following:

1. **Telephone** - Although the telephone is the most commonly used communications tool in schools, most schools do not have enough lines and, worse, service is typically lost when electricity is lost. In preparing for crises it is recommended that

   - Schools should have at least one line with an unpublished number.
   - The telephone company should be consulted in pre-planning; there may be unused lines in the school's control panel which can be activated if needed.
   - Use standard jacks and mark them clearly so emergency service personnel can find them; the school floorplan which is part of the school's "emergency toolkit" should have the location of jacks marked clearly.

2. **Intercom systems** - Most schools have such a system; systems which include teacher-initiated communications with the office and use a handset rather than a wall-mounted speaker are most useful in an emergency. Instructions for use of the intercom system should be posted near the controls in the office area. Additionally, students should be taught to use the intercom system — the teacher may have a medical emergency or be otherwise unable to operate the system.

3. **Bullhorns and megaphones** - Often used at pep rallies and field days, battery-powered bullhorns or megaphones can also be very effective tools for communication in an emergency and should be a part of the school's "emergency toolbox." Procedures governing storage of the bullhorn in the office area will help ensure its availability in an emergency; finding it in the storage closet in the gym may not be an option. If one is not available (or out of batteries!) at the school, law enforcement vehicles are sometimes equipped with speakers — another good reason to include law enforcement in the pre-planning process.

4. **Walkie-talkies** - routinely used in many schools, walkie-talkies provide a reliable method of communication between rooms and buildings at a single site. All staff need to know how to operate the walkie-talkie (even those who don't routinely carry them).

5. **Computer telecommunications** - a relatively new tool, the potential capability of existing computers to be used for communication both within the school and to other sites needs to be assessed as part of the pre-planning process. E-mail or electronic bulletin boards may be a useful tool for updating information for staff, central office, other schools in the affected area, and possibly for other community agencies.

"Teachers are the most direct link to students.
It is vital that they be kept informed in the event of a crisis."

—Reducing School Violence, SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education

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6. **Fax machines** - The fax machine is a potentially valuable tool for both sending and receiving information in an emergency. In the case of off-campus accidents, for example, lists of students and staff members involved, their locations, and needed telephone numbers can be quickly and accurately communicated. Medical information, release forms, and medical authorizations can be faxed, signed, and returned in emergencies.

7. **Cellular telephones** - increasingly available and affordable, the role of cellular telephones as a communications tool needs to be carefully assessed. They may be the only tool working when electric service is out and are a particularly useful link to staff members who may be en route to or from the site of an accident or other emergency. They are increasingly being used to link the multiple vehicles transporting students and staff on off-campus trips.

8. **"Panic buttons"** - Some schools have installed "panic buttons" connected directly to the police or other emergency services. In some communities, there is an immediate response; in others, the police or fire department call the school to confirm the emergency.

9. **Alarm systems** - Bells or buzzers may be sounded in different ways to signal different types of emergencies — for example, fire, tornado, or special alert (with instructions to follow).

Technology can be a very effective tool for communication during a crisis.

Voice and Hand Signals

Although not involving "technology," voice and hand signals (and training staff and students to recognize them) are important instruments of communication in an emergency. Some signals which may be used include:

- *waving arms* - waving arms back and forth over head means to follow in the direction led by the teacher.

- *palms down* - moving arms up and down with palms toward the ground will signal students to get down on the ground wherever they are at the time.

- *palms out* - pushing palms out, moving arms forward and back, will signal the students to stop where they are and to stand absolutely still.

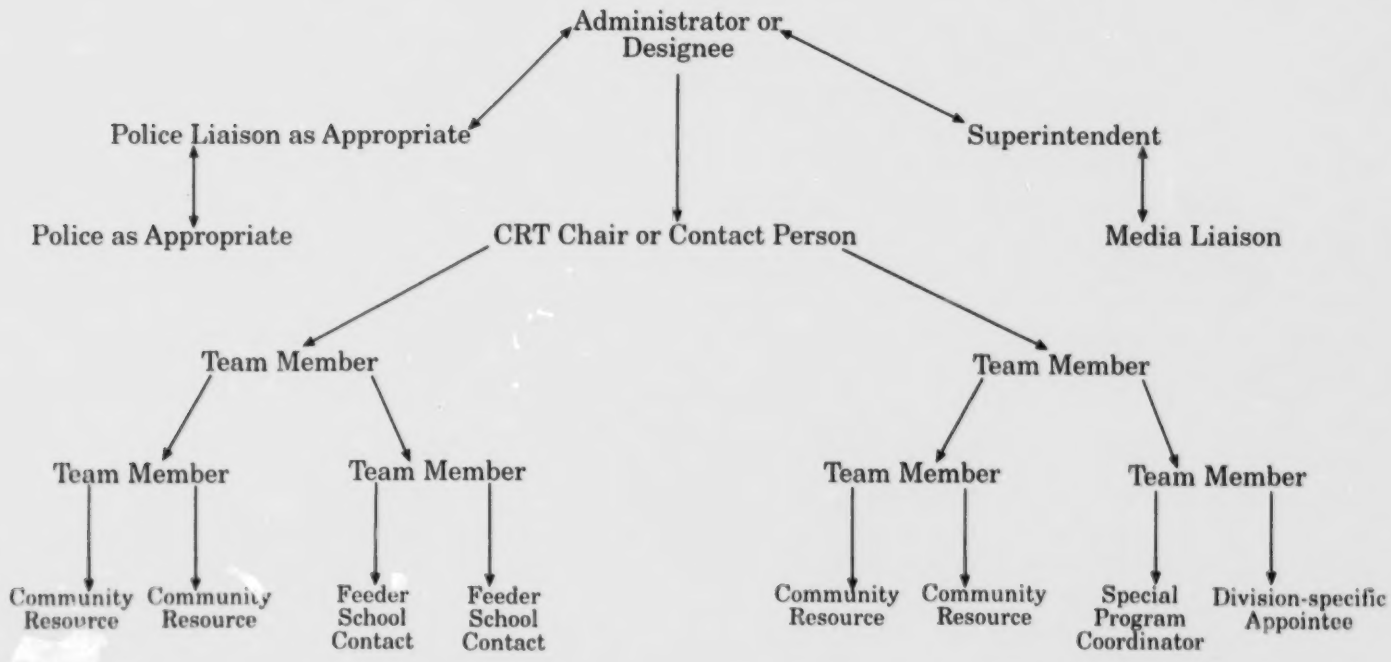
- *waving arms side-to-side* - moving arms side-to-side in front of body will signal students to move away from the center of the playground and to take shelter toward the edges of the playground.

Using Code Messages

Some schools have established code words or phrases to notify staff of certain emergencies — particularly those requiring quick action. These are most appropriate for extreme emergencies such as armed intruder, sniper, or hostage situations, or for tornado warnings. Codes may signify certain levels of alert which require specific actions such as locking classroom doors, keeping students away from windows, or evacuation. It is important that all staff members — including substitutes — know the codes.

Telephone Tree

Once it is verified that a crisis exists, the building administrator or designee sets the phone tree in motion. When a crisis occurs during weekends, vacation periods, or when a large number of staff is away from school, it will be necessary to transmit information via a phone tree. At other times, when crises occur when school is in session, only the people outside the school building need to be contacted via telephone.



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Samples

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Communications Samples

Initial Announcement of Crisis Event
(Source: Association of California School Administrators)

TO:
FROM:

"We have just been advised of a tragedy involving a member(s) of our school. I am sad to announce that _____ has died/has been in a serious accident. As soon as we have more information, we will pass it on to you. People will be available in the building to help those of you who need extra support in dealing with this situation. Your teachers will advise you of the location and times available for this support.

"As soon as we know the family's/families' wishes regarding _____ we will share that information with you. We ask that all students remain in their classrooms and adhere to their regular schedules."

Samples

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Student Suicide

To be read to the students by the classroom teacher.

TO: School Faculty
FROM: Principal
SUBJECT: (Crisis)
DATE:

John Doe committed suicide early Saturday morning. As a faculty we extend our sympathy to John's family and friends.

We encourage all students to consider the tragic nature of this death and to realize that death is final. John's death is a reminder to us all that the act of taking one's life is not an appropriate solution to any of life's problems nor is it an act of courage. Please let your teachers know if you would like to talk to a counselor or other staff member.

Funeral services for John will be held in _____and there will not be a memorial service in this area. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to (name and address).

Samples

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Student Death from Accident or Illness of Which Students May Be Aware

As many of you are aware, we were sorry to hear that_____, a student in the 11th grade of our school, died on_____ from injuries in a car crash. The funeral arrangements have not been completed. As soon as we learn the funeral plans, we will announce them. Those of you who want to discuss your feelings about_____'s death should obtain a pass from your teacher to go to the library. This help will be available throughout the school day. Let us have a moment of silence. . . Thank you for your cooperation today.

Communications with Parents and Community

Communications with Parents and Community

A very important aspect of managing crises is dealing effectively with parent reactions. Communication with parents and the community is best begun before a crisis occurs. Some useful strategies include the following:

1. Educate parents about the school crisis plan, its objectives, and the need for it. Such information can be included in the school handout or other informational materials prepared for parents, at parent orientations, or at other informational meetings.

2. Develop a relationship with parents so that they trust and feel comfortable calling school personnel in the event of crisis.

3. Develop materials that may be needed including:
   a) draft formats of letters to parents informing them of what happened,
   b) information re: possible reactions of their child and ways to talk with them, and
   c) how the school and school division are handling the situation.

4. Develop a list of community resources which may be helpful to parents.

5. Identify parents who are willing to volunteer in case of an emergency, include them in preparation efforts, and include them in training.

Communication with parents and the community is best begun before a crisis occurs.

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In the event of an emergency parents have very specific information needs. First, parents want to know their child is safe; then, parents want to know the details of the emergency situation, to know how it was handled, and to know that the children will be safe in the future. The first reactions are likely to involve *fear*. Upon learning of an incident at the school, parents are likely to descend upon the school in search of their child or to telephone, frantically seeking information. Establishing a system for responding quickly to parent needs for information is an important part of pre-planning. *Anger* is another common reaction of parents, particularly in the case of senseless acts of violence. In the event of a crisis or disaster:

1. Tell parents exactly what is known to have happened. Do not embellish or speculate.

2. Implement the plan to manage phone calls and parents who arrive at school.

3. Schedule and attend an open question-and-answer meeting for parents as soon after the incident as possible. The meeting is an opportunity for school officials to listen and respond to parent concerns (which is helpful in combatting rumors and other misinformation) and to work on restoring parental trust in the school. In the event of an incident which involved damage or destruction, an open house for parents and other members of the community to see the school restored to its "normal" state helps everyone get beyond the crisis.

The first reactions are likely to involve fear.

Samples

LETTERS TO PARENTS

Unexpected student death - elementary
(adapted from letter developed by Chesapeake Public Schools)

Dear Parents,

Yesterday, we learned that one of our first graders, _____, died while in the hospital. _____ had his tonsils removed over the past weekend. Complications set in after his parents took him home and he was taken back to the hospital where he died yesterday afternoon.

Today, at school, each teacher read a short message about _____to his/her class. We discussed what happened and how _____died. We also stressed that many people have their tonsils out every day and have no problems with it. Our guidance counselor and our school psychologist were available throughout the day to talk with any student that may have had a particularly difficult time dealing with the news.

Any death is difficult for children to understand. _____'s death is particularly difficult due to his young age and its unexpectedness. The fact that _____died while at the hospital and the fact that it was related to having his tonsils out may also be frightening for children, especially those who may need to have their own tonsils out in the future.

We recommend that you take some time to discuss _____'s death with your child. We suggest allowing your child to talk about how he/she feels and any fears or concerns he/she may have as a result of hearing this news. We are enclosing a list of suggestions to help you talk with your child about _____'s death and/or the death of any loved one.

If you feel that your child would benefit from talking with our guidance counselor or our school psychologist, please call us at the school and share your concerns.

The faculty, staff and students extend our heartfelt sympathies to the _____family and to all their friends. We at the school will miss _____very much. He was our friend and we loved him.

Sincerely,
School Principal

Samples

LETTERS TO PARENTS

Bus Accident
(adapted from letters developed by Chesapeake and Hanover County Public Schools)

Dear Parents,

This morning, prior to school, there was an accident involving a school bus and an automobile. There were known injuries to the passengers of the car. The children on Bus #_____ witnessed the aftermath of the accident, but were not involved in it.

The children from the bus involved in the accident were taken to the library by the guidance counselors and administration. The children were asked if they were injured in any way and their parents were then contacted. Your child, because of being on Bus #_____ may show delayed reaction to the accident. Please be alert over the next several days to symptoms of delayed reaction, including:

- a desire to be alone, unusually quiet
- loss of appetite
- problems with sleeping, nightmares
- difficulty with concentration
- crying
- angry outburst, short temper
- headaches, upset stomach
- depressed, sad

Your child may also exhibit some physical complaints. Please contact (principal's name) to fill out an accident report. The school will be offered support services for students needing help dealing with the accident. We will also provide counseling services to parents in helping their children to cope. Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns. (Give school phone number.)

Sincerely,
Principal of School

Samples

INFORMATION SHEET TO SHARE WITH PARENTS

Helping Your Child After a Disaster

Children may be especially upset and express feelings about the disaster. These reactions are normal and usually will not last long. Listed below are some problems you may see in your child:

- Excessive fear of darkness, separation, or being alone;
- Clinging to parents, fear of strangers;
- Worry;
- Increase in immature behaviors;
- Not wanting to go to school;
- Changes in eating/sleeping behaviors;
- Increase in either aggressive behavior or shyness;
- Bedwetting or thumbsucking;
- Persistent nightmares; and/or
- Headaches or other physical complaints.

The following will help your child:

- Talk with your child about his/her feelings about the disaster. Share your feelings, too.
- Talk about what happened. Give your child information he/she can understand.
- Reassure your child that you are safe and together. You may need to repeat this reassurance often.
- Hold and touch your child often.
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime.
- Allow your child to mourn or grieve over a lost toy, a lost blanket, a lost home.
- If you feel your child is having problems at school, talk to his/her teacher so you can work together to help your child.

Please reread this sheet from time to time in the coming months. Usually a child's emotional response to a disaster will not last long, but some problems may be present or recur for many months afterward. Your community mental health center is staffed by professionals skilled in talking with people experiencing disaster-related problems.

— Source: Association of California School Administrators

Communications with Media

Media policy varies from one school system to another. Contact is generally channeled through one person. Most newspeople are sensitive, open to suggestions and interested in doing a reputable job. When dealing with the media, the following suggestions will promote clear communications:

- Deal up-front with reporters. Be honest, forthright and establish good communication with the media before problems or a crisis occurs.
- Do not try to stonewall the media or keep them from doing their job.
- The school should decide what to say, define the ground rules, issue a statement and answer questions within the limits of confidentiality.
- Identify a single information source.
- Advise school staff of media procedures.
- Advise students of the media policy. Let them know that they do not have to talk, that they can say no.
- If the crisis is a death, consult with the deceased student/staff member's family before making any statement. Explain school system policy and assure them that confidential information is being protected.

DURING A CRISIS:

- Attempt to define the type and extent of the crisis as soon as possible.
- Inform employees what is happening as soon as possible.
- Designate that a central source, such as the crisis communications center, coordinate information gathering and dissemination.
- Instruct all employees to refer all information and questions to communications centers.
- Remind employees that only designated spokesmen are authorized to talk with news media.
- Take initiative with news media and let them know what is or is not known about the situation.
- When communicating, remember to maintain a unified position and uniform message; keep messages concise, clear, and consistent; keep spokesman and alternates briefed.

- Contact the top administrator or designee to inform him of the current situation, emerging developments, and to clear statements.
- Delay releasing information until facts are verified and the school's position about the crisis is clear.
- Read all releases from previously prepared and approved statements to avoid danger of ad libbing.
- Assign sufficient staff to handle phones and seek additional information.
- Keep a log of all incoming and outgoing calls and personal contacts.
- Relieve key people from their normal duties so they may focus on the crisis.
- Express appreciation to all persons who helped handle the crisis.
- Prepare a general announcement to be given by the principal or designee. A straight forward sympathetic announcement of loss with a simple statement of condolence is recommended. Also, a statement that more information will be forthcoming, when verified, can be reassuring to students and staff.

Communicating with the Media in Times of Crisis

1. The ***primary goal*** should be to keep the public informed about the crisis while trying to maintain the privacy of students and ensure as little interruption of the educational process as possible.

2. As soon as possible, ***prepare a written statement*** that gives the basic facts clearly and concisely or ask the division Community Relations Director to prepare one for you. Two or three minutes spent writing down some specific points is valuable. If there is time, try to anticipate what some of the questions will be and prepare answers. Newspeople will always want to know: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Try them out on your colleagues and see if they have any recurring questions. Use the same facts in dealing with all media so the story is consistent.

3. If news media personnel arrive on campus while students are in class, ***guide*** their ***activities*** so they will not disrupt the educational process. The news media can come onto the campus but should not be permitted to enter classrooms.

4. ***Don't presume*** to tell a reporter what is or isn't newsworthy. That decision is made by the reporters and their editors. And never — absolutely never — lie to a reporter. Tell the bad news quickly; get it over with. It may be your only chance to set the record straight. It's vital to establish the division as the best source for information on the crisis. If the media think you're hiding something, they're likely to dig hard for information from other sources and play the story more sensationally — and perhaps less accurately. Protecting and enhancing the division's credibility is important.

5. ***Talk conversationally***, or you will inadvertently pitch your voice up and sound strained. If you don't understand the question, say so. Parroting the reporter's question is very dangerous on radio or video tape because the tape can be edited to sound like you concur whether you do or not. Suppose the reporter asks, "How are you handling this terrible shock?" Don't respond, "We are handling this terrible shock by . . ." Instead, respond in your own words to the effect that, "The students are continuing their usual schedules, following a morning assembly where we discussed the situation."

6. ***Answer each question and then be silent***. Stick with the statement. Don't embellish it and don't respond to media pressure to chat about it. Just because a TV reporter sticks a microphone in your face or a radio reporter lets the tape run does not mean you have to fill that prolonged silence. Don't worry. . . your pauses will be removed in the editing process. If you are standing for the interview, don't back up, even though the microphone seems to be put down your throat. Plant your feel firmly and stand your ground. Suggest that everyone sit down if you need "space."

7. Remember that ***conflict is news***, and reporters often frame their questions to bring out the conflict or emotion in a story. Guard your students against such intrusions if grief is involved in the response. (However, if the media wants student or community viewpoint, it may be well to arrange for them to talk to your PTA president.)

8. If a reporter asks ***several questions*** at once, say something like, "You've asked me several questions here. . . where would you like me to begin?" If a reporter interrupts you before you've finished your answer, pause, let the reporter finish, and then continue your answer. Don't let the reporter get you off track or tell you when you've finished your answer. However don't go into lengthy detail or run off with the interview either.

9. Don't let a reporter's friendly, sympathetic manner disarm you into giving him/her additional information. Don't assume any chatty comments ***"are off the record"*** even if you say they are. Keep in mind that the media aren't in business to help you with your communication needs: the media are in business to 1) make money and 2) disseminate news. "News" can be defined as any information of interest to the public.

10. Reporters are under constant ***deadlines***, but no deadline is so important that it's worth making an inaccurate statement. If a reporter says he/she has deadline problems, ask how long you have to get the information, and then try to obtain it within that amount of time. Don't put reporters off: they will only get more insistent and abrasive if you do so.

11. It is best not to answer a query with ***"No comment."*** Otherwise, the reporters may report you wouldn't answer questions or may interpret for themselves why you aren't answering. Instead, say, "I can't share that information with you right now, but I will call you as soon as I can release it. (And do call them). Or say, "I don't know the answer, but I should have it in an hour. Please call me. If you can't reveal information at all, tell the reporters why. *Examples:* Relatives of an injured student haven't been notified yet or revealing the identity of a witness would jeopardize an investigation, etc.

12. After you provide the written statement to the media or answer subsequent questions, keep a media ***log*** of whom you speak to and what you give them, whether it is the basic statement or a subsequent update. This allows you to track which medium received what information.

13. Don't ask a reporter for ***editing rights*** or to see the story for approval before it runs. Most news media have specific policies preventing this. Reporters may well interpret these requests as insults or a slight on their competence. Don't complain to the media if you feel you were treated unfairly. You may simply draw more attention to the crisis. If major story details are inaccurate in a newspaper story, you can ask for a correction. But getting a similar correction in a TV or radio story is more difficult and must involve a giant inaccuracy.

14. The Community Relations Department should be ***updated*** on any emergency. The Community Relations Department will assist district or building administration in handling interviews with news media and coordinate the flow of information.

Media Do's

- Emphasize your good record.
- Be accurate and cooperate as best you can.
- Be prepared for and prepare in advance a response to questions which might violate confidentiality or hinder the police investigation.
- Insist that reporters respect the privacy rights of your students and staff.
- Speak to reporters in plain English — not "educationese."
- When asked a question and you don't know the answer, say so, then offer to find out and call the reporter back.

Media Don'ts

- Don't try to keep the media out or "kill" a story.
- Don't say "no comment."
- Don't ad lib.
- Don't speak "off the record."
- Don't speculate.
- Don't try to cover-up or blame anyone for anything.
- Don't repeat negative/misleading words.
- Don't play favorites among media.

VI

Training & Maintaining Preparedness

Training •
Maintaining Preparedness •

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Training

Training

A crisis management plan cannot be implemented properly unless staff members know what the plan is and what is expected of them in the event of an emergency. In addition to staff training, it is important for students to know (and practice) emergency procedures. School-based training should be provided to all personnel, including instructional, custodial, and food service employees, temporary employees and volunteers. Inviting parent leaders (PTA officers, for example) should be considered; they have important roles in communicating with other parents and in helping restore equilibrium in the event of a major crisis. The training should include practice scenarios; examples of scenarios and a sample agenda are included in this chapter. A mock disaster drill coordinated with local emergency preparedness groups may also be conducted.

Training and inservice activities should be designed to meet three distinct needs:

1) How to prevent certain types of emergencies;
2) How to respond when emergencies occur; and
3) How to deal with the aftermath of an emergency.

Initial training should focus on an awareness of the school division and individual school's crisis management plans including various roles and responsibilities. Staff members need to understand what they can reasonably be expected to do and what they can reasonably be expected not to do; some discussion of issues of confidentiality and liability may be needed. Training typically includes a review of procedures for the management of specific types of crises, including use of emergency kits and equipment, and practice opportunities. The impact of crises on children and adults as well as helpful strategies to use in postvention are critical to include in the training.

Training for Crisis Team Members needs to be extensive and in-depth. A list of essential content and sample agenda is included in this Resource Guide.

Inviting parent leaders (PTA officers, for example) should be considered; they have important roles in communicating with other parents and in helping restore equilibrium in the event of a major crisis.

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Essential Content for Training Crisis Team Members and Preparing the School's Plan

1. Crisis definition and theory.
2. Types of school crises.
3. Childhood reactions to crisis by ages with the most common reactions being worry about the future, decline in school performance, regression in behavior and problem sleeping.
4. Children's developmental stages of the understanding of death.
5. Importance of giving everyone the facts to dispel rumors.
6. Permission for a wide range of emotions and providing everyone the opportunity to tell their story.
7. Each individual has his own unique history of loss and unresolved issues may resurface.
8. Severity of crisis response is affected by event intensity, duration, and the victim's stability.
9. Provide emotional support as soon as possible and keep staff and students together who have experienced a crisis.
10. Keep the school open and have it viewed as source of support.
11. Children are more resilient than adults, but they still need help.
12. Mental health workers must seek out those that need their help after a crisis.
13. Parent meetings are a very effective way to assist children by helping parents to understand the typical childhood reaction to a crisis and to help parents respond with patience, love, tolerance, and support.
14. Crisis team members should meet frequently to evaluate progress of crisis management.
15. A checklist of crisis steps should be developed to guide the team's actions.
16. A calling tree should be developed to enable the administrator to alert school personnel to a crisis so that they can begin planning.

17. Policies and procedures need to be developed which ensure a close working relationship with the local police and judicial authorities.

18. Clarify communication issues such as who calls the superintendent and other school personnel who need to know about the crisis.

19. Conduct crisis team meetings to process and review crisis team activities with emphasis on how to prevent or better manage crisis events.

"The most important step is to develop a written crisis plan and to familiarize school staff with it."

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Scenarios for Use in Training

For each scenario, identify key issues and formulate a preliminary action plan.

- A seven year old boy playing near a stairwell falls two stories inside the school. Classmates witness it. The child, seriously injured, is taken to the hospital by paramedics. Students are scheduled to be dismissed in 20 minutes.

- A 12th grade student driving home after a football game one Friday night fails to stop at an intersection and the accident results in the death of a classmate's mother. It is rumored that the boy was drinking.

- A student at your school has contracted meningitis and is hospitalized in critical condition. Health Department authorities have initiated procedures for immunization of classmates. There are untrue rumors that a cafeteria worker who coincidentally was hospitalized the same day is a carrier.

- A parent who has brought her child to school reports to the office that a house in the neighborhood caught fire early that morning and there were fatalities but she does not know who. The house is that of two students at the school.

- A bus carrying elementary students home one afternoon stops at an intersection where students looking out the bus see a young male shot in a drive-by shooting. The young man is a cousin of a student on the bus.

- It is a rainy Tuesday morning and, nearby, a truck has overturned releasing toxic fumes. The Fire Department has just ordered that your 600-student elementary school be evacuated immediately.

- You hear on the 11 PM news on a Sunday night that a 10th grade girl at your school is reported missing; she was not home when parents came home from a weekend trip. Minutes after the broadcast a staff member calls and reports that there are rumors that foul play is suspected. You know that she and her boyfriend who is a senior had a loud fight in front of many students on Friday afternoon as buses were loading.

- You are notified by police at 5:30 AM that a very popular teacher at your middle school commits suicide, leaving behind a husband and two children, one of whom attends your school.

- At a basketball tournament in a nearby city a member of the team collapses. Because of media coverage of the tournament, information about the incident is already being broadcast. The school has just been notified that the student died, but the family has not yet been reached. Students, including the student's sister, who have heard it on the radio are coming to the office to ask what has happened.

- You have just received a call from central office that there is a tornado warning for the part of the county in which your middle school is located. There are 10 portable classrooms; 2 classes in the gymnasium, 1 class coming off the baseball field, and busload of 5th graders arriving from the feeder school for an orientation visit.

Samples

Training Agenda

I. Introduction

II. Development of School-Site Crisis Management Plan

A. Managing crisis
   1. Preparation - before it happens
   2. Crisis response - when it happens
   3. Follow-up - postvention
   4. Delegating

B. Communications
   1. Rumor-control within the school
   2. Media procedures
   3. Communication with parents and community

C. Managing grief and loss
   1. Stages of grief
   2. First 48 hrs.
   3. Memorials, anniversaries planning

D. Legal issues
   1. *In loco parentis*
   2. Confidentiality
   3. Negligence/liability issues

E. Taking care of caretakers
   1. Helping staff personally manage crisis
   2. Self-care for team members

F. Community support and referrals
   1. Identifying community support resources
   2. Establishing and maintaining community linkages

III. Crisis Responses

A. Suicide
   1. Review of crisis response for suicide
   2. Prevention of "epidemic"
      a. Myths and facts; warning signs
      b. Identifying those at-risk
      c. Procedure for intervention with potentially suicidal student
   3. Follow-up activities

B. Other deaths - Review of crisis response and follow-up for each
   1. Accidental/sudden death of student or staff member
   2. Homicide
   3. Anticipated death (following illness, declining health)

Samples

C. Critical incidents at school - shooting, stabbing, weapons, intruder.
   1. Review of crisis responses for each
   2. Interface with local law enforcement
   3. Review of possible follow-up activities

D. Critical incidents (not at school) - rape, arrests, accidents, hate crimes or racial tensions
   1. Review of crisis responses
   2. Communication with involved authorities
   3. Review of possible follow-up activities

E. Natural disaster - Floods, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes
   1. Review of crisis responses for each
   2. Interface with local disaster relief agencies.
   3. Review of possible follow-up activities

IV. Community Support Services

A. Emergency Assistance
   1. Mental health
   2. Shelter/housing
   3. Food/clothing
   4. Child protective services
   5. Emergency Family Services
   6. Disaster relief
   7. Medical services

B. Counseling Services (nonprofit and community agencies)

C. Health Services/Clinics
   1. Medical and dental
   2. Substance abuse and Psychiatric

D. Hotlines
   1. Crisis
   2. Suicide
   3. Rape
   4. Child abuse (including sexual abuse)
   5. Crime
   6. Other community hotlines

E. Self-help
   1. Alcoholics Anonymous
   2. Ala-Anon/Ala-teen
   3. Parent support
   4. Other self-help

F. Bilingual/Refugee Resources
   1. Translators
   2. Programs/agencies

Samples

Sample Training Agenda For School All-Staff Training

I. Introductory background on development of School Crisis Management Plan

II. School Crisis Management Plan

- A. Purpose of Plan
- B. Overview of Plan
- C. General review of roles and responsibilities

III. Typical impacts of crises

- A. Shock; stages of grief
- B. Restoring equilibrium
  1. Importance of first 48 hours
  2. Postvention

IV. Communications

- A. Confidentiality
- B. Rumor-control within the school
- C. Communication outside school
  1. With media
  2. With parents and community groups

V. Dealing with specific types of crises

- A. Review of general procedures in the case of a suicide
  Practice scenario
- B. Review of general procedures in the case of accidental death
  Practice scenario
- C. Review of general procedures in the case of homicide
  Practice scenario
- D. Review of general procedures in case of natural disaster
  Practice scenario
- E. Review of general procedures in the case of bus accident
  Practice scenario
- F. Select additional incidents/scenarios appropriate for school.

Closing discussion and questions

Maintaining Preparedness

Maintenance of Crisis Management Plan

Changes — in personnel, policies, resources, and conditions — occur and make preparing for them a necessary part of crisis management in schools. Conducting drills and establishing a procedure for periodically reviewing and updating the Crisis Management Plan are two essential elements of maintaining preparedness.

Planning Steps for School Crisis Drills

1. Utilize a paper and pencil activity where the crisis team is presented with five possible crisis situations and each team member records their hypothetical response.

2. Team members discuss their anticipated responses and select one scenario to simulate each semester with precautions taken to not unduly alarm staff and students.

3. It is important to inform the public of the need for crisis planning and the conduction of drills.

4. Avoid the use of dramatic props such as starter pistols and simulated blood.

5. Place a sign in the area where drills are to be conducted clearly designating that a drill is taking place and let all relevant agencies know in advance that it is a drill.

6. Practice drills that do involve moving staff and students to a safe location.

7. An objective staff member from another building of the central office should observe the drill and give feedback to the crisis team.

8. The crisis team should meet and review their activities with the emphasis placed on continual improvement.

— Source: Poland, 1994

Examples of Procedures for Maintaining an Up-to-Date Crisis Management Plan

Annual Start-Up Procedures

1. Confirm membership of the crisis team.

2. Send a list of team members to the Community Relations Office.

3. Decide on a coordinator and substitute for synchronizing intervention and postvention procedures.

4. Inform faculty of crisis team members. Print crisis intervention and postvention information in the faculty handbook.

5. If in place, review critical incident communication codes with faculty and staff. For example, if the school has a code for teachers to keep all students in their classrooms, remind them of it.

6. Update faculty phone tree.

7. The team needs to not only review procedures annually, but should go through at least two scenarios using at least the Postvention Steps form. **The key to successfully handling a postvention incident is the preparation before the event.**

8. Meet with new staff members annually to inform them of crisis intervention and postvention procedures, emphasizing the referral process for crisis intervention.

9. Hold a general faculty/staff in-service on crisis intervention/ postvention procedures every several years.

Quick Reference:
Annual Review of Crisis Management Plan

1. Print crisis referral information in student handbook.
2. Print crisis referral information in faculty handbook.
3. Confirm membership of Crisis Response Team, filling vacancies which have occurred.
4. Review assigned roles and responsibilities of team members and revise, as needed.
5. Review overall Crisis Response Plan and update in light of changes in conditions and/or resources at school.
6. Update faculty of any changes in Crisis Response Team membership and procedures.
7. Include review of Crisis Management Plan and related procedures in new staff orientation.
8. Hold an all-faculty in-service on Crisis Management Plan and related procedures every two years.

Quick Guide to Crisis Management

Quick Guide to Crisis Management

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Introduction

Provided in this chapter are a variety of samples of guidelines and checklists for the management of specific types of crises. The information is arranged alphabetically, by type of crisis. Consistent with the purpose of this Resource Guide, multiple examples are provided for review and consideration by schools developing and/or refining their Crisis Management Plans.

Crisis Management Plans are best developed in light of conditions and resources of school divisions and individual schools. What is important in crisis management is that preparation occurs and that the plan "works" for a particular school and school division.

Examples presented here are from a broad range of sources including the crisis plans of many Virginia school divisions.

Contents

Examples presented here focus on the following crises:

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A

ACCIDENTS at School

Accidents at School

(Minor) Accidents at School

. . . On the playground. . .In the building or classroom. . . In physical education...

For minor accidents, injuries
Have students taken to clinic for assistance by a responsible person.

Other suggested preventive/supportive actions

- Post in the clinic the names of building staff who have completed paramedic training, Red Cross First Aid Training or other special lifesaving or life sustaining training or expertise (i.e., CPR); include name, schedule and phone number of school nurse.
- Post the list of emergency telephone numbers for the building by phones and other appropriate places.
- Keep a copy of emergency phone numbers and trained personnel behind this section page.
- Post general procedures in the clinic explaining when parents are to be notified of minor mishaps.
- Provide all staff with a one-page list of "emergency type" procedures of what to do in case of an accident or injury on the playground, or in the building or classroom.
- Provide in-service training with a knowledgeable speaker such as the school nurse or other trained health professional for your staff.
- Provide a standard location for placement of classroom emergency procedures.
- Provide each teacher with any special medical information about any student in his/her classroom having special medical or physical needs. Such conditions might include allergies, fainting, seizures, diabetes, etc.; also include procedures that teacher may follow in the instance of accident or other life threatening situation for the child/children.

A

ACCIDENTS to and from school

Accidents to and from School

In the event of accidents involving an employee or student who is on the way to or from school, try to determine whether or not help is on the way.

If help is not on the way, these are actions to consider:

- Call police, fire, or rescue as indicated by nature of accident (numbers provided)
- Notify Superintendent (numbers provided)
- Notify Assistant to Superintendent
- Notify Director of Community Relations
- Notify School Division Environmental Health & Safety Office
- Notify parents, spouse, or individual on emergency card.

If help is on the way, these are actions to consider:

- If not reached earlier, continue to try to notify parents, spouse, or named individual.
- If parents, spouse, or closest relatives are not available, discuss situation with an associate at the place of employment of the parents, guardian, spouse, or closest relative.
- Send a "calm" individual to observe situation.
- Send an employee trained in life sustaining techniques if indicated.

Aircraft Disaster

Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools

Aircraft crash into or near building:

- Call police, fire or rescue as indicated by the a cident (numbers provided)
- Call Managing Director of Facilities Services
- Notify Superintendent's Office
- Notify Director of Community Relations
- Notify School Division Environmental Healt & Safety Office
- Utilize emergency exit plan modified to maxi ize safety of students.
- Students and staff should be assembled in an rea as far from the crash scene as possible and should be hill and up-wind from the crash.
- Provide for treatment and removal of injur building occupants.
- Account for all building occupants and deter extent of injuries.

Aircraft on or near school site but no d to building:

- Call Director, Department of Facilities who will notify necessary emergency personnel.
- All students and staff should remain in the buildings. Any students or staff outside should report immediately to their classroom or designated area until further instructions are received.
- No evacuations should occur unless subsequent explosions or fire endanger the building.

A

ALLERGIC reaction

Allergic Reaction

Possible Symptoms:

- General feeling of impending doom or fright, weakness, sweating, sneezing, short of breath, nasal itching, hives, vomiting, cough, restlessness, shock, hoarseness, swollen tongue, severe localized swelling.

First Actions:

- Assess situation, remain calm, make student/employee comfortable.
- Only move for safety reason.
- Send for immediate help and medication kit (in cases of known allergies).
- Notify rescue squad or 911, depending on circumstances.
- Notify parent or guardian.
- Administer medication, by order of a doctor, if appropriate. Apply ice pack, keep warm.
- Observe for respiratory difficulty.
- Record on an attached label: time and site of insect sting and name of medicine, dosage and time, if appropriate.

Preventive/Supportive Actions:

- Encourage parents and guardians to list health situations on emergency card for their child.
- Encourage employees having health situations affecting them to alert building director and work associates of any difficulties and possible remedial actions.

A

ANGRY parent/ employee/ patron

Angry Parent/Employee/Patron

Source: National School Safety Center

Handling An Angry Parent*

** strategies may be adapted to use with angry employees and patrons*

- Be courteous and confident
- Remain calm
- Do not touch
- Keep at a reasonable distance
- Listen
- Allow the opportunity to vent
- Meet in a neutral, protected location
- Leave door open or have another staff member join you
- Avoid blame — focus on what can be done
- Ask:
  - "How can I help you get the services you/your child needs?"
  - "How can we work together?"
  - "What kinds of support can we put in place to help your child succeed?"

A

ASSAULT by Intruder

Assault by Intruder

CHECKLIST

- ❒ Determine the extent of crisis.
- ❒ If continued danger, move other potential victims from area.
- ❒ Provide first aid.
- ❒ Question victim - make reasonable notes for potential court case:
  —description of assailant
  —report of events
- ❒ Contact police (Youth Services Officer and/or 911
- ❒ Notify Superintendent.
- ❒ Instruct person answering the telephone to direct all requests to Public Information Office.
- ❒ Complete police information for charges.
- ❒ Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- ❒ Schedule follow up programs for staff and students.
- ❒ Call emergency staff meeting.

PROCEDURES

1. **Extent of the Crisis:**
   - Request police assistance when assailant(s) are outsiders.
   - Determine the number of victims. Determine the necessity for first aid or counseling.
   - Determine the amount of threat still pending - was this an isolated incident which is now over? Is there continued danger to the individuals already involved or to any other potential victims?
2. **Move Others to Safety:**
   If the assailant has not been contained and continues to be a threat to others, inform staff (via PA) to keep their students in the classrooms, away from the halls, door, or windows. Staff should remain calm and quietly move their students to other parts of the building, if so directed. Inform staff of potential plans as soon as possible.
3. **Provide First Aid:**
   Provide first aid for victim(s) via nurse, nurse's aide, trained staff member, or 911. Have someone at the entrance to meet and direct the ambulance staff to the victim and designate a staff member to accompany victim(s) in ambulance.

A

ASSAULT by intruder

4. **Question the Victim:**
   Make notes which can be shared with the police upon their arrival. These notes may be helpful in a court case.
5. **Contact the Police:**
   Contact 911 and your School Resource Officer.
6. **Notifications:**
   - The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
   - The Public Information Office will handle all media and community inquiries into the event(s).
   - The parents (or spouse) of the victim should be notified as soon as possible.
   - Inform staff of situation as soon as possible. A Crisis Team, identified for the school, can effectively deliver information to the other staff members so your time can be used for other decisions/actions.
   - The Transportation Department can, in extreme emergencies, provide buses for early dismissal. The Transportation Department will notify the Superintendent of the need for this dismissal.
   - The students will be able to deal with the situation by being informed of the facts as soon as possible, rather than receiving their "facts" through rumors.
   - The other schools should be given the basic information as soon as possible by the Public Information Office, since siblings/neighbors will quickly learn of the disturbance.
   - The Pupil Personnel Services may be needed to provide counseling support for students and staff in dealing with the trauma. This office may seek additional help from the County's Department of Human Resources.
   - The parents of other students in the community will need to learn the real facts, just as their children have learned them, to reduce the rumor factor.
   - After the crisis is over, the principal may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.

A

ASSAULT by intruder

7. **Telephone Answerer:**
   Prepare a statement for the individuals who answer the telephones to read. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the telephone number for the caller to use as a reference.
8. **Police Information for Charges:**
   The police will need to be sure of details from you as well as from the victim. Assault/Battery are chargeable offenses.
9. **Written Memo for Staff and Parents:**
   As soon as the immediate crisis/danger is over, the staff and parents will need to know, not only what occurred, but why you took the action that you did. Individuals with the correct facts can help to stop rumors and misperceptions.
10. **Follow-Up Programs**
    Your school guidance counselors can arrange special counseling for students and staff through Pupil Personnel Services.
11. **Call emergency staff meeting.**

B

BOMB threat

Bomb Threat

Bomb Threat/Telephone Threats
The building principal must evaluate the seriousness of bomb threats or other disruptive types of demonstrations using input from all sources; then, the principal acts in such a manner that reflects the best safety interests of those under his/her charge. Bomb and other threats may be originated in writing, in person, over the telephone or related through a second source.

Basic Documentation - The individual taking the call should:

- Keep the caller on the line as long as possible.
- Notify principal.
- Write down all the information obtained in the exact words. Use the record sheet immediately following these instruction pages; place copies of the bomb threat sheet at switchboard and other appropr te phone locations.
- Find out what time the bomb is due to go off.
- Document in writing, as soon as possible, other types of threat contacts including:
  - —Specific time message is received.
  - —Date and day of week.
  - —Exact wording of message.
  - —Estimation of sex, age, cultural background of person making call.
  - —Make note of background noises, tone of voice.

Authorities to be involved:

- Police (number provided)
- Directors below will immediately notify Deputy and the Superintendent. It is only necessary to call one of the following:
  - —Managing Director, Facilities of Services (number provided)
  - —Director of Community Relations (number provided)
  - —Environmental Health and Safety Office (number provided)

B

BOMB threat

The building administrator or designee shall:

- Notify the authorities.
- Consider the safety of students and staff as the prime factor. If advised, direct students and staff to safe areas of the campus. Nothing is to be touched or altered; do not open desks or lockers.

Do not re-enter building until authorized:

- Alert staff of situation and implement building search procedure (see below).
- School activities should be continued as normally as possible in designated safe areas.
- The recommendation to close school will be made only after consultation between the Central Office, security and building administrator.
- Submit written reports as appropriate to Director, Department of Facilities following the incident.

Checklist

- ❒ Listen carefully to the caller to gain as much information as possible. Notify the School Resource Officer if the caller is in the building.
- ❒ If the call appears to be a crank call, ask teachers to survey their instruction area and nearby restrooms.
- ❒ If the call could be real and the School Resource Officer is not in the building, call 911 immediately.
- ❒ Evacuate the building. DO NOT USE THE PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM OR TURN LIGHTS ON OR OFF.
- ❒ Notify Superintendent's Office.
- ❒ Follow directions given by Policy regarding return to the building.
- ❒ If necessary, contact transportation to arrange for early dismissal.
- ❒ Follow-up activities.

B

BOMB threat

Confidential building search procedures for use by staff only:

The principal and/or assistant principal will:

A. Call Police Department.
B. Call Superintendent's Office.
C. Call Maintenance Department.
D. Notify school staff by pre-arranged signal.

The Signal:

An announcement over the public address system as follows:

PLEASE BE CERTAIN TO SEND TRANSCRIPTS TO THE OFFICE TODAY.

A fire drill will be called about 15 minutes before threatened time, if known.

- Following the signal, the staff will conduct a thorough search of assigned areas as outlined below. If anything is found, it should not be touched in any way. Get an adult to "watch it," while you report it personally to the principal. Following the search, each staff member responsible for searching areas (all teachers and others) must send a note to the office reading, for example, "Brown - Clear."

- Responsibilities for search effort:
  All search efforts should be conducted quietly and quickly without alarming or informing pupils. Each teacher will search his own area, in addition to the following search responsibilities:

Custodial closets . . . . . Lead Custodian I
Girl's toilet . . . . . Principal, assistant or designee
Boy's toilet . . . . . Principal, assistant or designee
Mechanical room . . . . . Lead Custodian I
Library, office and a.v. room . . . . . Librarian
Food service area, dining room . . . . . Cafeteria manager
Principal's office and other areas . . . . . Office personnel
Outdoor storage . . . . . Lead Custodian I

B

Samples

BOMB threat

Bomb Threat Report Form

Make numerous copies and keep them at switchboard or main telephone for immediate use by operator/secretary.

Questions to Ask

1. When is bomb going to explode?
2. Where is it right now?
3. What does it look like?
4. What kind of bomb is it?
5. What will cause it to explode?
6. Did you place the bomb?
7. Why?
8. What is your address?
9. What is your name?

If voice is familiar, who did it sound like? _____

Exact wording of threat:

_____

_____

Threat Language

- ❒ Well spoken (educated)
- ❒ Foul
- ❒ Irrational
- ❒ Taped
- ❒ Incoherent
- ❒ Message read by threat maker:

Time: _____ Date:__/__/__

Sex of caller: _____

Culture: _____

Age: _____

Length of call: _____

Number at which call was received: _____

Remarks: _____

_____

_____

B

BOMB threat

Background Sounds

- ❒ Street
- ❒ PA System
- ❒ Voices
- ❒ Motor
- ❒ Local
- ❒ Booth
- ❒ Other _____
- ❒ Animal Noises
- ❒ Static
- ❒ Music
- ❒ House Noises
- ❒ Office Machinery
- ❒ Long Distance

Caller's Voice

- ❒ Calm
- ❒ Angry
- ❒ Slow
- ❒ Rapid
- ❒ Soft
- ❒ Loud
- ❒ Laughter
- ❒ Normal
- ❒ Distinct
- ❒ Slurred
- ❒ Whispered
- ❒ Cracking Voice
- ❒ Other _____
- ❒ Nasal
- ❒ Stutter
- ❒ Raspy
- ❒ Deep
- ❒ Ragged
- ❒ Clearing Throat
- ❒ Crying
- ❒ Disguised
- ❒ Accent
- ❒ Familiar
- ❒ Deep Breathing

B

BUS accident

Bus Accident

Goals:
- Safety
- Containment
- Effective communication
- Mobilization
- Assessment and follow-up

Prevention:
Have a clear operation plan and be familiar with that plan. Maintain a bus accident folder including a list of each bus number, names and emergency telephone numbers of all occupants.

Intervention:
In the event that a bus accident occurs and the school has been contacted for assistance, the principal or designee determines and coordinates the appropriate responses. Interventions may include:

At the scene
- Provide emotional support.
- Be available and attend to the injured, as directed by emergency medical personnel.
- Be available and attend to the uninjured and account for all.

At the school
- Provide emotional support and coordination.
- Attend to the affected students.
- Provide information to faculty.
- Call Mental Health for assistance, as needed.
- Contact parents of students involved.

At the hospital
- Provide emotional support for the injured and their families.

Postvention:
- Send letter to parents. See sample.
- Assess the response and arrange follow-up. (Crisis Team)

B

BUS/AUTO accident on trips away from division

Bus/Auto Accident on Trips Away from Division

Precautionary Measures Before Leaving District

- School buses, by law, are required to carry first aid kits. Check to see if it is in place.
- Take along in all automobiles a first aid kit on all field trips.
- Take along a list of students in attendance. Include for each a home telephone number, names of parents, parents' work telephone, home address, and any health or medical information.
- Take along a list of emergency phone numbers (listed below).
- Take along a list of chaperones and teachers who are in attendance on the trip, their home addresses and home phone numbers, name and work telephone of spouse or nearest relative and medical and health information on each.
- Follow School Board policy and administrative regulation on field trips.

In the Event of an Accident

- Remain calm.
- If threat of fire exists, move children to safe place.
- Call emergency vehicles/services: police, fire, ambulance, highway patrol for locality and begin administration of first aid.
- Call principal of school.
- Notify Director of Administration and Support (list numbers).
- Notify Director of Pupil Transportation.
- Notify Director of Community Relations (who will notify the Superintendent).
- Notify Director of Environmental Health & Safety Office.

Do not issue statements to the press. Refer press to the civil authorities in charge or to the Community Relations Director.

C

CHEMICAL spill

Chemical Spill

***Inside* the building**

- Evacuate the area immediately.
- Check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)* to determine the urgency of the situation.
- Notify the building principal/supervisor/director as soon as possible.
- The building principal/supervisor/director will call the fire department if deemed necessary for consultation.
- Notify Environmental Health and Safety Office (list numbers).
- Notify the Managing Director, Department of Facilities.

*Lab file, principal's office, or custodian office

***Outside* the building**

- Insure that all students are in the building and that they remain there.
- Shut off all outside air ventilators.
- If you are not alerted to the situation by division personnel, phone Environmental Health & Safety (list numbers).
- Notify Director of Facilities of Services.
- Keep telephone lines clear for emergency calls only.
- Release students to parents or designee only.

C

CHILD-NAPPING or lost child

Childnapping/Lost Child

Checklist:

- Telephone police
- Call Superintendent's Office
- Notify parents of child
- Identify team to work on the crisis while res of school maintains routine
- Obtain full description and pull out school pict ure
- Search school building and grounds
- If childnapping, try to obtain description of su pect
- When child is found, contact Superintend nt, notify teacher, fill out Crisis Team Report
- Prepare memo to inform staff and parents of in cident and actions taken
- Arrange for counseling for staff and students, i necessary
- Call emergency staff meeting

Specifics

1. Immediately after it has been determined t at a child has been lost/taken, contact the Police.
2. Call the Superintendent's Office to report the incident.
3. Contact the parents of the child involved. E stablish a communication plan with them, if necessary
4. Identify a team to work on the crisis. Design te person nel to deal with phone communications, etc., and other administrative staff to assist as appropriate. If the inci dent occurs during the school day, classroo routine should be maintained.
5. Pull the school picture of the child and ob ain a full description of the child (including clothing) t assist the police.
6. Conduct immediate search of school bui ding and grounds.
7. In cases of childnapping, obtain from w inesses a description of the suspect.
8. When a child is found, contact the Super ntendent's Office, notify teacher and fill out the Crisis Te m Report.
9. Prepare a memo to staff outlining the situa on. Give factual information, as appropriate, to allo them to respond to students' questions knowledgeabl Prepare an appropriate memo to parents.
10. If appropriate, arrange for counseling assi tance for students and staff.
11. Call emergency staff meeting.

C

CHILD-NAPPING or lost child

Childnapping

Preventive activities which may help avoid childnapping situations are as follows:

- School secretary should have at her desk a list of students who are not to be released to anyone except a particular parent or guardian.
- Emergency cards of such students should be tagged.
- Before releasing a child to anyone except a parent or guardian on the list, the school secretary should check with the custodial parent and/or guardian for approval; a record of the time and date of phone approval should be made and kept.
- When parent telephones a request that a child be released from school, the identity of the caller should be confirmed (by a separate call to the parent or guardian, if needed) before the child is permitted to leave. In the event of any doubt, the message and phone number should be written down, a return call should be made after cross checking the phone number with those on file in the child's folder or on the emergency card.

In the event of a childnapping:

§ Phone the parent
§ Notify the police (list numbers)
§ Notify Deputy Superintendent
§ Notify Director of Community Relations
§ Deputy Superintendent will notify Superintendent.

Do not release any information to the press. Refer requests for information to the Community Relations Department.

D

Death

Death of a Student or Staff Member

- Contact Crisis Team members and have a team meeting as soon as possible.
- Notify Superintendent's Office
- Notify Community Relations Department
- Prepare a fact sheet giving accurate, up-to-date information.
- Hold a faculty meeting as soon as possible. Review the procedures for the day, availability of support services, referral process for at-risk students.
- Review "Reminder Sheet" for teachers in Crisis Handbook.
- Contact family of the deceased. Preferably an administrator and Crisis Team member should visit the family at their home and offer assistance.
- Hold a faculty meeting at the end of the day to review the day's events.
- Notify all bus drivers by written memo to be alert for students who show signs of emotional distress, along with a telephone number for drivers to use to reach a guidance counselor.
- Personal contact should be made with the driver of the bus which goes into the neighborhood of the student who has died. Supply a school staff member to ride the bus if that seems necessary.
- Refer to Crisis Intervention Handbook under Postvention procedures for complete details.

D

DISASTER

Disaster
Destruction of Part or Whole of Building
(e.g., tornado, plane crash, bomb)

Checklist

- Call 911.
- Obtain information on extent of damage.
- Evacuate using fire alarm or move students to safe areas in building.
- Assign one adult to supervise others in attending to injured.
- Assign staff member to assist rescue personnel.
- Call Superintendent's Office and Youth Service Officer.
- Arrange for dismissal of students.
- Handle all distribution of information to public through Public Information Office.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Call 911 for immediate help.
2. Damage: Inspect extent of damage and injuries.
3. Evacuation: If there is no danger outside the building, use fire alarm to evacuate building. Safe Areas: Identify areas away from problem area and route to be taken by classes in going to safe areas. Designate which classes/groups of students should go to which area.
4. Attend to Injured: Assign free adults to attend to injured, with one adult designated as "in charge".
5. Meet Rescue Personnel: Have staff members direct rescue personnel to problem area and assist in providing access as needed by rescue personnel. Make Head Custodian available to assist rescue personnel.
6. Superintendent: Notify of plan being implemented.
7. Dismissal: Arrange for dismissal with Superintendent's Office and Transportation. Elementary schools may have to follow emergency closing procedures for students and should inform Extended Day of plans for dismissal. Public Information Office should be notified of emergency closing so that radio and TV stations can be contacted.

D

DISASTER

8. Information:
   - Consider briefly summarizing the situation for all students and adults prior to dismissal, by P.A. or preferably by informing teachers and having them explain to students.
   - If time permits, prepare a written memo to parents detailing the situation and how it was handled, including plan for follow-up, to be sent home with students or distributed the following day.
   - Call an emergency staff meeting after students leave to explain the situation and any plans for follow-up.
   - Involve Public Information in all information being prepared and distributed and refer media and other calls from the general public to that office.
9. Call an emergency staff meeting.

D

DISASTER preventing dismissal

Disaster Preventing Dismissal

(e.g., hurricane, tornado, sniper, plane crash)

Checklist

- Gather information.
- Identify safe areas in building.
- Direct staff to escort students to identified areas.
- Call Superintendent's Office and Youth Service Officer.
- When situation is "clear," return students to class.
- Arrange for dismissal if appropriate by calling Superintendent and Transportation.
- Prepare memo/letters to inform staff and parents.
- Distribute information to public via Public Information Office.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Information may be received from a variety of sources:
   - telephone call
   - Superintendent's Office
   - radio or television
   - visual observation

   Ascertain specifics such as extent of immediate danger, possible length of time danger may exist.
2. Safe areas:
   Consider large areas at the interior of the building away from numerous windows and outside walls which have a reliable source of lighting. Designate which classes/groups of students should go to which area. Evacuate trailers to main building or safe area.
3. Move students:
   Use the P.A., if working, or a system of notes sent by messengers, to inform teachers and other adults of the situation and where to bring students.
4. Superintendent:
   Notify of plan being implemented; call police and maintain contact as necessary.
5. All "clear"
   Monitor situation to ascertain when danger is removed; direct teachers and other adults to escort students back to class when situation is clear.

D

DISASTER preventing dismissal

6. If crisis interferes with normal dismissal, arrange with Transportation and Superintendent's Office to dismiss students following normal procedures. Elementary schools will want to inform Extended Day personnel in advance of dismissal.
7. Information:
   - Consider briefly summarizing the danger and its resolution for all students prior to dismissal by P.A. or preferably by informing teachers and having them explain to students.
   - Consider preparing a written memo to parents detailing the situation and how it was handled to be sent home with students or distributing it the following day.
   - Prepare written memo to staff summarizing the situation and how it was handled.
8. Handle all distribution of information through the Public Information Office.
9. Call emergency staff meeting.

F

FIGHTING

Fighting

Violence Between Two or More Students
(Physical Fighting)

Goals:
- Safety
- Effective communication
- Mobilization
- Containment
- Assessment and follow-up

Prevention:
Have a clear operation plan and be familiar with that plan. Be alert to patterns of stress and agitation in students. Be familiar with information provided regarding managing a potentially dangerous person.

Intervention:
Intervening and managing physical altercations and/or fights require making a judgement call. There may be several goals at one time and individual circumstances will determine the priorities of your interventions.
Interventions may include:

A. Disperse the crowd and ensure the safety of the students.
B. Call for help and assistance in managing the incident.
C. Focus on diffusing the fight.
D. Attend to medical needs.
E. Be knowledgeable about intervening with individuals who are dangerous. Refer to additional materials in Resource section.

Postvention:
- Assess the response and provide follow-up of situation. (Crisis Team)

F

Fire/Arson/Explosives

FIRE, ARSON or explosives

Checklist

- Sound alarm; evacuate building.
- Call 911.
- Determine if there are any serious injuries.
- Call: Superintendent
- Public Information Office
- Arrange transportation for dismissal.
- Determine building status for return to classes.
- Follow-up activities.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Sound alarm. Evacuate building if serious threat of danger. Prior arrangements should be made for the evacuation of any handicapped.
2. Call 911 and ask for required emergency services.
3. If there are serious injuries, notify necessary rescue personnel. Provide first aid through school personnel, such as school nurse, nurse's aide, and athletic trainer.
4. Call Superintendent's Office and notify of incident and actions.
5. In all probability, school will have to be dismissed and arrangements for transportation will have to be made. Students and staff will have to be informed. A portable bull horn should be available to make announcements to students and staff who have evacuated the building.
6. If the building is damaged, several different steps may have to be taken. Severe damage will require delayed repair work - another location for classes will have to be scheduled through the Superintendent's Office.
7. Prepare written memo for staff to advise of follow-up procedures. Send letter for parents home with students.
8. Call emergency staff meeting.

G

GAS LEAK

Gas Leak

Natural gas leaks, with odor in the building, may occur and bring danger of explosion. Natural gas rises and will often be outside because most gas lines are outside the building. Natural gas is mixed with Mercaptan to give it odor. The gas goes up and the odor goes down.

If a leak is in or near the building:
Evacuate the building immediately, following your local building evacuation plan. Get students a safe distance from the building.

Turn off the main gas valve.

Location: _____

Phone Fire Department (list numbers here)

Phone Facility Services (list numbers here)

Phone Commonwealth Gas (list numbers here)

If time permits, phone the Superintendent's Office to alert that office of the current situation. That office will notify the Community Relations Office.

Keep students at a safe distance until the problem has been corrected.

H

HOSTAGE, armed/ dangerous intruder

Hostage Armed/ Dangerous Intruder Situations

Checklist

- Contact the police (911).
- Secure all classroom areas to prevent intrusion.
- Notify Superintendent.
- Instruct staff to keep all students in their present areas, unless otherwise directed by the police (via P.A. system).
- No school personnel should circulate through building.
- Instruct person answering the phone to direct all requests to Public Information Office.
- Keep telephone lines open for police use (pay telephones as well).
- Keep maps of the building and grounds available in more than one area of the facility (i.e. Main Office and Custodians' Office).
- Identify individuals familiar with the building to assist the police in locating and isolating the intruder.
- Prepare written memo for staff and parents.
- Complete and submit Crisis Team Report.
- Schedule follow-up programs for students and staff to review security plan.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Contact the Police:
   Hostage-taking or endangering the safety of others are criminal offenses.
2. Secure All Classrooms:
   The more closely contained the intruder can be kept, the less the danger there is to others and the easier it is for the police to apprehend the individual.
3. Notification:
   - The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
   - The Public Information Office will handle all media and community inquiries.

H

HOSTAGE, armed/ dangerous intruder

- Keep staff well informed. A Crisis Team, identified for the school, can effectively deliver information to the other staff members so your time can be used for other actions/decisions.
- The Transportation Department will provide buses for evacuation of students to a safer location or to their homes. Transportation will notify the Superintendent of the need for this dismissal.
- The students will be able to deal with the situation by being informed of the facts as soon as possible, rather than receiving their "facts" through rumors.
- The other schools should be given the basic information as soon as possible since siblings/neighbors will quickly learn of the disturbance.
- The parents of the school community will need to learn about the safety of their own children, to be informed where to pick them up if needed, and to learn the real facts to reduce the rumor factor.
- After the crisis is over, the Public Information Office may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.

4. Staff to Keep Students in Present Areas: Students should not be released for any reason until told to do so by the police.
5. No Personnel Circulating: For the same reason as #4, all staff should be protected from involvement in the crisis where possible.
6. Telephone Answerer:
   Prepare a statement to be read by the individuals who answer the telephones. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the telephone number for the caller to call.
7. Keep Phone Lines Open: The police and other public safety personnel will need access to the phones with highest priority. Even the pay phones need to be available to the police.

H

HOSTAGE, armed/ dangerous intruder

8. Maps in More Than One Location: School maps will be most helpful to the police in locating the intruder and planning strategies for the apprehension. More than one area should house current maps in case the intruder has "holed up" in the area where the maps would usually be found.
9. I. D. Persons Familiar with the Facility: Persons familiar with the entire building should be available to discuss the interior room arrangements, etc. These individuals should be available at the chosen school map location away from the scene.
10. Written Memo for Staff and Parents: As soon as the immediate crisis/danger is over, the staff and parents will need to know, not only what occurred, but why you took the action you did.
11. Serious Incident Report: Complete and submit Crisis Team Report within twenty-four (24) hours.
12. Follow-up Activities: Guidance counselors, as well as Pupil Personnel Services, can provide counseling for students and staff.
13. Call emergency staff meeting.

INJURY

Injury

Checklist

- Promptly render proper first aid.
- Notify parent/guardian.
- If severe, contact Rescue Personnel.
- Designated staff member accompanies student to hospital.
- Record events in Clinic Log.
- Report accident according to Specifics.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Teacher, person in charge, school nurse, or nurse's aide promptly renders proper first aid.
2. Notify parents if judged necessary based on severity of injury. If parent not notified at time of accident, telephone later or send note home with student.
3. If severe injury, arrange transportation for student to hospital emergency room. Notify parent or guardian of action taken as soon as possible.
4. If student taken to hospital, principal or designated representative should accompany and remain with student until parent, guardian, or physician assumes charge.
5. Record all accidents in Clinic Log.
6. Call emergency staff meeting.

Intruder/Trespasser

INTRUDER or trespasser

Checklist

- Determine the whereabouts of the intruder/trespasser.
- Isolate the individual.
- Determine the extent of the crisis.
- Make reasonable notes for potential court case.
- Move other students and staff from area.
- Contact police - 911.
- Notify superintendent.
- Instruct person answering the telephone to direct all requests to Public Information Office.
- Complete and submit police information for charges.
- Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- Complete Crisis Team Report.
- Schedule follow-up activities for staff and students, including security plan review.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Determine whereabouts of the intruder: Use school maps to assist police and staff members in locating intruder.
2. Isolate intruder from rest of building and students.
3. Determine extent of the crisis:
   - Trespass with no safety hazard may be dealt with through informing the intruder of the offense being committed. If trespasser refuses to leave, wait for police to arrest. If the trespasser has previously been warned (placed on notice) trespass charges may be filed without the arrest of the offender.
   - Trespass with threat to others' safety will require assistance from the police. Trespass charges should be filed.
4. Make notes. Recording what has occurred can provide information important to the police and in subsequent court cases.
5. Move other Students/Staff: Staff may be asked to keep their students in certain areas, or to keep them out of certain areas. Staff should move students as quietly and quickly as possible when directed to do so.

INTRUDER or trespasser

6. Contact the Police: Trespassing is a misdemeanor or felony, depending upon the location of the intrusion.
7. Notification:
   - The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
   - The Public Information Office will handle media and community inquiries.
   - Keep staff informed of actions. A Crisis Team, identified for the school, can effectively deliver information to other staff members so that the administrator's time can be used for other decisions/action.
   - The Transportation Department can, in extreme emergencies, provide buses for early dismissal. The Transportation Department will notify the Superintendent of the need for this dismissal.
   - The students will be able to deal with the situation by being informed of the facts, as soon as possible, rather than receiving their "facts" through rumor.
   - Other schools should be given the basic information as soon as possible by the Public Information Office since siblings/neighbors will quickly learn of the situation.
   - The parents of the students in the community will need to learn the real facts, just as their children have learned them, to reduce the rumor factor.
   - After the crisis is over, the Public Information Office may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.
8. Telephone Answerer: Prepare a statement for the individuals who answer the telephones to read. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the phone number for the caller to call.
9. Police Information for Charges: The police will need to be sure of details from you as well as from others interviewed. Trespassing is a misdemeanor or felony, depending upon the location of the intrusion.
10. Written Memo for Staff and Parents: As soon as the immediate crisis/danger is over., the staff and parents will need to know, not only what occurred, but why you took the action that you did.

11. Crisis Team Report Submit it within twenty-four (24) hours.
12. Follow-Up Activities Pupil Personnel Services can provide counseling for students and staff. The building security plan should also be reviewed.
13. Call emergency staff meeting.

INTRUDER or trespasser

L

LIFE-THREAT-ENING CRISIS

Life-Threatening Crisis

(Major) Life-Threatening Crisis to Individual
When a life-threatening situation is perceived to exist, a building administrator or person in charge of a building or office should:

First Actions
Call a rescue squad 911
Apply first aid and life-sustaining techniques using trained persons on staff.

Names:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Call parent/guardian immediately.

P

PERCEIVED crises

Perceived Crises

Perceived crises are conditions or situations, often community-based, that are perceived as potentially affecting a large number of people. Examples of perceived crisis include racial events, school rivalry situations, events in which a group feels left out or not represented, introduction of new school procedures without adequate warning, real or perceived unsafe conditions such as toxic fumes or food poisoning, gang-related activities, or rumors about people with HIV/AIDS or other contagious conditions. It is the task of those in charge to defuse any irrational response.

Prevention:
- Identify situations in advance that may be perceived crises.
- Establish open lines of communication with students and staff.
- Develop a procedure for dealing with the public and the media.

Intervention:
- For any health condition, immediately contact the appropriate health authorities.
- Don't panic. Project a sense of calm and control.
- Gather detailed and accurate information about the perceived crisis.
- If necessary, call a team meeting to assess the situation and make decisions on what actions to take.
- Provide appropriate faculty, staff and those individuals or groups affected by the situation with specific information.
- Designate someone who would act as a single point of contact for controlling rumors. Keep lines of communication open; a feeling that secrets are being kept can increase the sense of crisis.
- Have trained individuals available to speak with small groups of students/staff.
- Take all actions that you have determined necessary to prevent a more serious situation from developing.

Postvention:
- Conduct stabilizing activities as soon as possible to project an atmosphere of normal conditions.
- Conduct follow-up and assessment activities with team members and other staff.

P

POISONING

Poisoning

In the event of the poisoning or suspected poisoning of a student or an employee:

Immediate Actions:

- Call the rescue squad (list numbers here)
- Call the Poison Center (list numbers here)
- Administer first aid suggested by poison information center.

Preventive Measures:

- Post in the clinic information from Poison Control Center regarding emergency numbers.
- List in the clinic the names of building personnel who have special paramedic, first aid training, or other special life-saving or life-sustaining training.
- Provide staff information on possible poison materials in the building.

P

Power Failure/Lines Down

POWER FAILURE lines down

If there has been a power failure at a school, or if lines are reported down in the area of the school:

Power failure*

- Notify Virginia Power (list numbers here)
- Notify Maintenance Section (list numbers here)
- Notify Managing Director, Department of Facilities (list numbers here)

Lines down in area*

- Have an adult in the area of the downed lines to prevent children and other people from going near them.
- Notify Virginia Power (list numbers here)
- Notify Maintenance Section (list numbers here)

* Note that telephone notification may require use of cellular phone, depending on whether telephone is set up to rely on electricity.

R

RAPE

Rape

Source: California Association of School Administrators

When a school is notified that a rape has occurred to a student or staff member, the Crisis Response Team and the school must protect the identify and right to privacy of the rape survivor and the alleged perpetrator. News of the incident should be contained as much as possible. Appropriate response by school staff will be directed at minimizing the fear of fellow students and quelling the spread of rumors. As opposed to convening a Crisis Response Team meeting and alerting the student body, services provided to the victim and her/his family should be kept confidential and should be coordinated with outside providers, such as a rape crisis team or hospital emergency room.

RAPE ONLY BECOMES A CRISIS TO BE MANAGED BY SCHOOL STAFF WHEN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS EXIST:

- A rape occurs on campus.
- A member of the rape survivor's family requests school intervention.
- The rape survivor's friends requests intervention.
- Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging.
- Students witness police action or emergency services response.

When one or more of the above conditions exists, the following should be implemented:

- Direct the person providing the information not to repeat it elsewhere in the school.
- If the rape occurred on campus, notify the appropriate law enforcement office and/or local rape crisis team.
- If office staff members heard the report, tell then not to repeat or give out any information within or outside school unless they are specifically told to do so.
- Designate the Crisis Response Team member closest to the victim to talk to her/him about the types of support he or she and the closest friends need, and the person(s) the rape survivor would like to provide that support.
- Provide space in the school for the rape survivor and identified peers to receive support services. Provide necessary passes to release these students from class to receive services.

R

RAPE

Rape is a crime of violence. For the rape survivor, it often is an experience of fear, loss of control, humiliation, and violence. Rape survivors may experience a full range of emotional reactions. It is extremely beneficial for rape survivors to seek emotional support regarding the assault. Monitor any school intervention in a rape incident with the following checklist:

RAPE RESPONSE CHECKLIST

School involvement in incident due to:

- ❒ Rape occurrence on campus
- ❒ Survivor's family requests school intervention
- ❒ Survivor's friends request intervention
- ❒ Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging
- ❒ Students witness police/emergency services
- ❒ Information provider/recipients enjoined not to repeat information elsewhere.
- ❒ Steps taken to protect survivor's identity and right to privacy.
- ❒ Law enforcement and rape crisis agency notified if appropriate.
- ❒ Crisis Response Team member closest to victim designated to talk with student and determine type of support and support provider desired.
- ❒ Rape survivor encouraged to seek additional support from community rape crisis agency.
- ❒ Space provided on site for rape survivor and identified peers to receive support services.
- ❒ School services coordinated as appropriate and legal with outside service providers.
- ❒ Action taken to quell rumors.
- ❒ All records related to rape incident and services provided stored in confidential file.

S

SHOOTINGS, woundings, attacks

Shootings/Woundings/Attacks

Checklist

- Assess the situation
- Call 911
  - — Police/Youth Services Officer
  - — Ambulance
- Use emergency signal - all students and staff are to stay in classrooms, secure the door, and stay on the floor.
- Establish a command post with several telephones available.
- Implement first aid procedures until rescue service arrives.
- Notify Superintendent's Office.
- Keep a written log of events.
- Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- Implement necessary follow-up activities.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Notify the police, and other necessary emergency staff.
2. Determine if the perpetrator is still on premises - determine number of victims and identify witnesses.
3. The emergency signal to staff and students should convey the seriousness of the situation. Follow-up announcements will be necessary to keep everyone informed. Prepare a general statement of the facts.
4. Establish a command post to handle the load of the Crisis Team and to direct the press and concerned members of the community to the Public Information Office.
5. Implement necessary first aid procedures through trained staff, school nurse, nurse's aide, physical education department, and/or athletic trainer. Direct rescue personnel to injured and give any required assistance. Designate staff member to accompany victim(s) in ambulance.
6. Contact Superintendent's Office.
7. Identify a place where a log of events is to be kept. Record all significant events, actions, and individuals that are involved.

S

SHOOTINGS, woundings, attacks

8. Keep staff informed through a memo or emergency staff meeting. Parents may be informed through a letter sent home with students.
9. Follow-up management should be well-delegated. Crisis counseling for students and staff may be needed, and security concerns should be considered. All staff will assist in restoring building to normal state. Reopen school as soon as possible.
10. Call emergency staff meeting.

S

SUICIDE threats

Suicide Threats

Crisis Intervention Procedures For Potentially Suicidal Students

Referral

Go to a Member of the Crisis Team

Students at risk can self-refer or be referred to the crisis team by school staff, parent, friend, neighbor, or other person from the community. Students at risk range from those talking of hopelessness, to those writing poems with suicidal intent, to students telling someone of planning to harm themselves. Team members might include principals, psychologists, counselors, teachers, social workers, and nurses. The team member receiving the referral should gather pertinent information from the referral source before contacting other team members.

Team Consultation

Designate Case Manager, Gather Information

When possible, the available team members gather to designate a case manager, considering the following factors: 1) existing relationship with the student, 2) time and coverage constraints, 3) seriousness of the problem, 4) experience of the members. The team or case manager reviews the student's records and gathers information from staff who know the student.

Crisis Interview

Conduct Interview

The case manager interviews the student on the day of the referral. The case manager determines the extent of suicidal thinking, the potential plan of suicide, the lethality of the plan, and the history of the student's suicidal thinking and attempts. For severe cases, insure the safety of the student through adult supervision.

S

SUICIDE threats

Team Review

Team Members Decide Plan

The case manager returns as soon as possible to the available team members to discuss the case and formulate a plan of action. Depending on the seriousness of the case, the team may wish to consult with other members not initially involved or discuss case with County Mental Health. Plans formulated by the team might range from no further involvement, to monitoring by a specific staff member, to referral for counseling within the school setting, to asking the parents to take immediate action with their child.

Outside Contacts

Parents Notified

Parents of all interviewed students will be contacted by the case manager on the same day of referral and interview. Parents will be told of the reason for referral, the outcome of the interview, and the plans formulated by the team. When the suicide potential is significant, the case manager needs to ascertain that the parents accept responsibility to follow through with the team's recommendations. If the student is dangerous to self and the parents cannot be located, then the case manager contacts the Crisis Intervention Unit of the Mental Health Department. In extremely dangerous situations, the police may be called first to ensure the safety of the student. Follow-up remains the responsibility of the case manager unless explicitly agreed to by other staff members. The case manager documents the case and shares information with other team members.

V

VANDALISM

Vandalism

- Photograph any willful and malicious destruction of school property
  (e.g., graffiti, broken windows, etc.).
- For minor damage, simply note the time, date, and type of damage for your records.
- For serious acts of vandalism (e.g., hate crimes or gang-related activity), report them to your school security officer or the police.
- Clean up and repair the damage as soon as possible to avoid encouraging future acts of vandalism.
- Aggressively prosecute all vandals to convey that you will not tolerate this type of offense.
- Collect restitution by having the offender pay money or provide labor to clean and/or repair the damage he or she has caused.

W

Weapons Situation

Checklist

- Assess the situation.
- Notify police.
- Gather information.
- Isolate individual or suspect.
- Do not use force or touch the person or weapon.
- Remain calm.
- Tell another administrator what the situation is.
- Use emergency signal to notify teachers of the threatening situation and have teachers keep students in classroom until all is clear.
- Notify Superintendent.
- Refer media questions to Public Information Office.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Assess the situation.
2. Notify police. Provide as much information as possible. Be prepared to act as a resource and liaison between school and police. If necessary, have a map of the school available for police.
3. Gather as much detailed information as possible. Try to determine:
   - Location, identity and detailed description of individual.
   - Location and description of weapon.
   - Any pertinent background information on individual, including possible reason for carrying a weapon.
4. Isolate individual or suspect. (If weapon is in a locker or elsewhere, prevent access to it.)
5. Confer with police when they arrive. They will advise you how they intend to proceed.
6. If interaction with the individual is imminent, do not use force or touch the person or weapon. Avoid sudden moves or gestures.
7. Remain calm. Try not to raise your voice — but, if this becomes necessary, do so decisively and with clarity. Your tone and demeanor will strongly influence the outcome of the crisis.

W

WEAPONS situation

8. Be certain that at least one other administrator (or designee) is aware of the situation, but limit information to staff and students on a need to know basis.
9. Notify Superintendent.
10. Use emergency signal to notify teachers of the threatening situation and have teachers keep students in classroom until all is clear.
11. Refer media questions to Public Information Officer.
12. Call emergency staff meeting.

W

Weapons

Source: National School Safety Center, 1995

Handling a Weapon-Wielding Student

- Evacuate the area
- Evaluate the perpetrator
- Isolate
- Negotiate
- Remain calm
- Get help
- Avoid heroics
- Don't threaten
- Keep a safe, nonintimidating distance
- Avoid abrupt sporadic movements
- Look for a place to dive or jump
- Report incident to law enforcement

W

WEATHER

Weather

Tornado, Inclement Weather, Earthquake

Goals:
- Safety
- Effective communications
- Mobilization
- Containment
- Assessment and follow-up

Prevention:
- Post and practice mobilization plan.

Definitions:
Severe Weather Watch: Forecast of severe weather in area; normal activities continue; no school-wide announcement; principal or designee monitor the situation.
Severe Weather Warning: Severe and dangerous weather situation approaching. Be prepared.

Intervention:
1. Principal alerts staff of impending situation. Call emergency numbers as needed; call superintendent. (principal or designee)
2. Evacuate classrooms according to plan; provide for handicapped.
3. Move students quickly and quietly to designated area, underground shelter if available or interior hallways on first floor. Avoid windows, auditoriums, gyms, and any wide span or overhead structure. North and east walls are preferable to south and west walls. Sit in fetal position with face and head protected.
4. Get word to all students and staff who are outside or who are in out-lying buildings.
5. Check for and provide care for injured.
6. Secure tool box. (designated duty)
7. Account for all students/staff/others.
8. Determine status for safe return to classes or dismissal. (principal or designee)

Postvention:
- Assess the response and prepare follow-up of situation. (Crisis Team)

References and Appendices

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Petersen, S. and Straub, R. L. (1992). School crisis survival guide: Management techniques and materials for counselors and administrators. West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education.

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Appendix A

Sources of Information and Assistance

Agencies and Organizations

Center for School-Community Collaboration
School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University
P. O. Box 842020
Richmond, VA 23284-2020
(804) 828-1482
FAX (804) 828-1323
TDD: 1-800-828-1120

Center provides training and technical assistance to schools, communities, and other youth-serving agencies on a wide range of topics related to alcohol and other drugs and youth violence prevention, including strategies for community mobilization around youth problem behaviors.

Community Services Boards

Community Services Boards (CSBs) operate throughout Virginia to provide mental health services, including emergency and crisis intervention services. Working relationships with CSBs are vital to effective crisis management in schools.

Crisis Management Institute
P. O. Box 331
Salem, OR 97308-0331
(503) 585-3484

Offers:
- on-site crisis response
- trauma intervention and debriefing
- crisis training and planning
- trauma prevention, preparedness and planning
- training workshops related to youth risk issues and school safety

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472
http://www.fema.gov

Publications available include The Compendium of Exemplary Practices in Emergency Management.

National Association of School Resource Officers
2714 SW 5th Street
Boynton Beach, FL 33435
(561) 554-4903
Fax (561) 736-1736

NASRO's primary goal is to establish a rapport between youth and law enforcement, through the establishment of school-based policing programs. The association assists school districts and police agencies in the formation of SRO programs and offers a comprehensive training program for school-based police officers, as well as, school personnel. NASRO also certifies police officers as "practitioners" in this highly specialized field of law enforcement, upon completion of its required criteria.

National School Public Relations Association
1501 Lee Highway, Suite 201
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 528-5840
Fax (703) 528-7017

NSPRA provides training, products, and services to:
- promote better public understanding of the objectives, accomplishments, and needs of education in a diverse society
- build public support for the best educational opportunities and achievements for all students

NSPRA offers:
- workshop assistance to school districts, state departments of education, regional service agencies, and state and national associations
- research-based communication audits to analyze communication flow, targeting, content, and effectiveness of organizations' messages
- several national professional development meetings annually
- the NSPRA Seminar, the most comprehensive school communication workshop anywhere
- three national awards programs
- publications, including a monthly membership newsletter, a building-level PR newsletter, a FAX News Service

National School Safety Center
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805)373-9977
FAX (805) 373-9277

The National School Safety Center serves as a national clearinghouse for school safety programs and activities related to campus security, school law, community relations, student discipline and attendance, and the prevention of drug abuse, gangs, and bullying. NSSC was created in 1984 by Presidential mandate through a partnership of the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education with Pepperdine University. The Center's primary objective is to focus national attention on the importance of providing safe and effective schools. NSSC provides on-site training and technical assistance to school districts and law enforcement agencies nationwide in the area of school crime prevention. The center offers training, publications, videotapes, and display posters. The following video is available from NSSC:

"School Crisis: Under Control" (1991) - combined actual news footage of school crisis events with insights and recommendations of school officials who have dealt firsthand with violent tragedies on their campuses. Offers educators valuable advice about school crisis prevention, preparation, management and resolution. Topics covered include staff roles and responsibilities, dealing with the media, providing adequate communication systems and signals, arranging transportation, and offering grief counseling.

Selected Print Resources

Child Safety Curriculum Standards (1991) helps prevent child victimization by assisting youth-serving professionals in teaching children how to protect themselves. It includes sample strategies that can be integrated for both elementary and secondary schools. The age-appropriate standards deal with the topics of substance abuse, teen parenting, suicide, gangs, weapons, bullying, runaways, rape, sexually transmitted diseases, child abuse, parental abductions, stranger abductions, and latchkey children. Each of the 13 chapters include summaries, standards, strategies, and additional resources. (353 pages)

Gangs in Schools: Breaking Up is Hard to Do (1993) offers an introduction to youth gangs, providing the latest information on various types of gangs — including ethnic gangs, stonier groups, and satanic cults — as well as giving practical advice on preventing or reducing gang encroachment in schools. The book contains valuable suggestions from law enforcers, school principals, prosecutors, and other experts on gangs. The concluding chapter describes more than 20 school- and community-based programs throughout the country that have been successful in combating gangs. (48 pages)

School Discipline Notebook (1992) is revised edition originally published in 1986. This book helps educators establish fair and effective discipline. It reviews student rights and responsibilities, including the rights to safe schools. The correlation between orderly, disciplined schools and safe, productive schools is examined. Legal policies that regulate discipline methods used in schools also are explored. In addition, suggestions are offered for practical tasks required of educators, including preparing discipline codes, defining and tracking infractions, and disciplining special education students. A resource section suggests publications, films, and policies providing further assistance with school discipline. (53 pages)

Virginia Department of Education
Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program
Office of Compensatory Programs
P. O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120
(804) 225-2871

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act is administered by the Office of Compensatory Programs within the Division of Curriculum and Instruction.

Virginia Department of Emergency Services
310 Turner Road
Richmond, VA 23225-6491
(804) 674-2499
http://www.state.va.us/des/des.html

One of the primary responsibilities of the Virginia Department of Emergency Services (VDES) is planning to deal effectively with natural and manmade disasters. To keep the public informed and prepared to handle emergency and disaster situations, the Public Information Office maintains a library of emergency preparedness videotapes and publications. Videotapes have been screened by VDES staff and come highly recommended. Videotapes may be borrowed for a period of two weeks and are appropriate for use in presentations to student groups, civic organizations, employee safety meetings, etc. Some do not have copyright restrictions and may be copied and broadcast. Emergency preparedness publications are available free of charge. Call for VDES Video and Publications Catalogue.

Selected videotape topics include:

Earthquake
Emergency Management
Flood
General Disaster Preparedness
Hazard Mitigation
Hazardous Materials
Hurricane
Media Relations
Search and Rescue
Thunderstorms/Lightning
Tornado
Winter Hazards

Selected publication topics include:

General Disaster/Emergency Preparedness
Earthquakes
Fires
General Storm & Weather
Hurricanes
Thunderstorms
Tornado
Winter Awareness
Floods
Nuclear

Virginia Department of State Police
P. O. Box 27472
Richmond, VA 23261-7472
Comprehensive Crime Prevention Program
Coordinator, Barbara S. Bolton
(804) 674-4632

Through the Comprehensive Crime Prevention Program, state troopers who are certified as crime prevention specialists are made available to assist the public, including schools, in crime prevention strategies and techniques.

National Safety Council
444 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

The general materials catalog lists a variety of accident prevention and safety-oriented educational materials including videotapes.

Appendix B

Books for Students, Staff, and Parents

Primary Grade Level —

Alexander, Sue, Nadia the Willful, New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.

Nadia's brother dies and her father decrees that no one can talk about him. Book emphasizes how important it is for one to talk about death and the life of the deceased.

Anders, Rebecca, A Look at Death, Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 1978.

Describes the sadness that comes of death and the importance of mourning; compassionate and positive.

Bartoli, J., Nonna, New York: Harvey House, 1975.

Demonstrates the patience and understanding needed by young children through the death of a young boy's grandmother.

Bernstein, Joanne E., When People Die, New York: Dutton, 1977.

Answers with assurance many questions on children's minds after a death.

Brown, Margaret, The Dead Bird, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1965.

Classic book describes the reactions of a group of young children when they find a dead bird.

Carrick, Carol, The Accident, New York: Seabury Press, 1976.

Christopher witness the accidental death of his dog and goes through the grief process trying to find ways to undo the accident until he reaches acceptance of the death.

Fassler, Joan, My Grandpa Died Today, New York, Human Science Press, Inc., 1971.

Illustrated book about a young child's reaction to the death of his grandfather.

Herriott, James, The Christmas Day Kitten, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1986.

Describes the relationship between a dying cat and its owner. Story spans a year to show the healing that comes with time.

Viorst, Judith, The Tenth Good Thing about Barney, New York: Atheneum, 1971.

Boy learning to accept death as a reality of life through remembering all the good things about his deceased cat.

Zolotow, Charlotte, My Grandson Lew, New York: Harper, 1974.

Shows how a young boy lessens his loneliness over the death of his grandfather through sharing the memories.

Upper Elementary Grade Level —

Anderson, Leone Castell, It's OK to Cry, Elgin, IL: The Child's World, 1979.

After the death of an uncle two boys discuss their feelings, funerals, and what happens after death.

Bunting, Eve, The Happy Funeral, New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

A young Chinese girl comes to terms with her grief and takes comfort in the cultural rituals while preparing for her grandfather's funeral.

Clardy, Andrea Flech, Dusty Was My Friend: Coming to Terms with Loss, New York: Human Sciences Press, 1984.

Explores coming to terms with feelings after a friend is killed in an automobile accident.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill, Grover, Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1970.

A dying mother kills herself leaving her husband and eleven-year-old son to cope with their grief and their relationship.

McLendon, Gloria H., My Brother Joey Died, New York: Julian Messner Publisher, 1982.

Covers a spectrum of problems resulting from the death of an older brother including guilt, problems in school, the funeral, harsh comments from others; a good discussion book.

Miles, Miska, Annie and the Old One, Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1985.

Story portraying the natural way of life and death to a young Indian girl whose grandmother believes she will die when the rug she is weaving is completed.

Paterson, Katherine, Bridge to Terabithia, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1977.

Winner of the Newberry Award, this book sensitively describes the guilt felt by the survivor when a friend dies.

Rofes, Eric E., The Kids Book about Death and Dying, Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1985.

A students' group explores different kinds of death, different emotional reactions, and different approaches to life after death.

Smith, Doris Buchanan, A Taste of Blackberries, Elgin, IL: Chariot Books, 1981.

A young boy feels guilty and experiences a full range of emotional reactions to the death of a friend who dies of a bee sting.

Tolan, S. S., Grandpa and Me, New York: Scribner's, 1978.

Eleven-year-old girl describes candidly how she copes with the increasing senility of her grandfather and his eventual suicide.

White, E. B., Charlotte's Web, New York: Harper and Row, 1952.

Classic story using animals to portray the natural events of life and death.

Zim, Herbert and Sonia Bleeker, Life and Death, New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980.

Provides factual answers to questions about life and death; deals sensitively with physical facts, attitudes, traditions and feelings.

Teens —

Agee, J., A Death in the Family, New York: Bantam, 1969.

Pulitzer Prize winning novel offers insights into the impact of a death on a family and the misunderstandings that occur.

Arundel, H., The Blanket Word, Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1973.

Portrays the idealism and self-doubts of a young college student as she finds new meaning in relationships after the death of her mother.

Buck, Pearl S., The Big Wave, New York: Lothrop, 1948.

Novel depicts a young Japanese fisherman who changes his views of life and death after he is left to deal with the destruction of his village.

Guest, Judith, Ordinary People, New York: Ballantine Books, 1980.

Powerful story of a family bereft by unexpressed grief over the death of one son and the attempted suicide of the other son.

Krementz, Jill, How It Feels When a Parent Dies, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1981.

Eighteen children, aged seven to sixteen, tell what happens to them when their parent dies. Useful resource for teachers and counselors.

Rabin, G., Changes, New York: Harper, 1973.

Teenage boy must learn to find the strength to deal with the changes in his life brought on by the death of his father; involves a move, change in lifestyle, and typical pressures of adolescence.

Richter, Elizabeth, Losing Someone You Love: When a Brother or Sister Dies, New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1986.

Young people describe their emotions and how they learned to cope with a sibling's death.

Death —

Grollman, E. A. (1980). Explaining death to children. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co.

Practical information for parents to help their child understand death through theology, psychology, biology, and culture.

Dunne, E., McIntosh, J., and Dunne-Maxim, K. (1987). Suicide and its aftermath: Understanding and counseling the survivors. New York: W. W. Norton and Co.

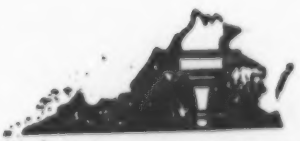
Comprehensive collection of essays addressing many perspectives of the survivors of suicide; includes chapters on sibling survival and adolescent suicides.

Stein, S. D. (1984). About dying: An open family book for children and parents together. New York: Walker and Co.

Guidelines to assist parents and children when discussing feelings and actions related to any death. Includes section for parents to read before reading book with children.

Wolf, A. (1978). Helping young children to understand death. New York: Child Study Press.

Presents typical questions asked by children and suggestions for constructive family and school discussions.



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